

**Imagining China and the Chinese: Cultural Identities of British  
Chinese Young People in and around London**

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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## **Declaration**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the cultural identities of young British Chinese Londoners aged between thirteen and eighteen years of age, using data from their reflective narratives and lived experiences. The theoretical framework of this study conceptualizes cultural identity as a changing process constructed through discourse and social practice. The analysis of cultural identities starts from examining the situated identifications adopted by individuals within a specific time and place. This mixed-method study focuses on three themes. The first examines young British Chinese people's relationship with their ethnic origins and family cultural heritage. Analysis of this theme considers how these young people construct the contested meanings of terms such as 'China', 'Chinese people' and 'Chinese culture' through the lens of their present experiences. The second theme investigates the experiences and meanings of being young British Chinese people through the patterns of their media consumption, their learning experiences and social interactions with peers in both mainstream and Chinese complementary schools in Britain. It also examines the ways in which individuals, seen as active agents operating within structural constraints, position themselves through strategic practices and negotiations within varied and powerful fields of discourse. The third theme considers how the positioning of young British Chinese – as perceived by themselves and others – produces potential prospects as well as problems. This thesis challenges the essentialized and unchanging understanding of culture and identity and presents a view of multiple possibilities for the realization of British Chinese cultural identities. Meanwhile, it also demonstrates that the emergence of a British Chinese identity is subject to a number of structural constraints such as gender, age and socio-economic status; and shaped by international political and economic relations and increasingly hybridized global cultural flows. The findings provide a complex, relational and heterogenized picture of the lives and cultural identities of young British Chinese in London.

**To my parents, my husband Joe and my son Matthew**



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## Abbreviation

**A-level:** The General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level. It is a secondary school leaving qualification in the United Kingdom and an internationally recognised school qualification

**CCCS:** Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, a research centre at the University of Birmingham, England

**CHL:** Community/Heritage Language

**DfE:** Department for Education

**FSM:** Free school meals

**GCSE:** General Certificate of Secondary Education taken by school students aged 16 across England and Wales.

**HESA:** Higher Education Statistics Agency

**PRC:** People's Republic of China

**ROC:** Republic of China

**SIA:** Social Identity Approach

**SNS:** Social networking site

**SPSS:** Statistical Package for the Social Science

**UKAPCE:** UK Association for the Promotion of Chinese Education

**UKFCS:** UK Federation of Chinese Schools

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

It was a sunny Saturday afternoon in the summer of 2010. My 27-year-old partner (now husband) Joe, who was born in China and raised in London from the age of 8, and I, a 26-year-old Chinese-born and raised student who had lived in London for just over two years, were walking in the beautiful countryside of High Wycombe, in Buckinghamshire, England. As we walked, we were discussing contemporary events and issues occurring in both Britain and China, mostly speaking English and sometimes Mandarin. Along the way, we politely greeted people who walked towards us, encountering a group of elderly people with maps and walking sticks, a couple pushing a buggy and a jogger wearing headphones. When a tall, slim, middle-aged English lady walked towards us with her elegant greyhound, she halted and greeted us with a warm smile. 'Where are you from?' she pronounced slowly. 'China,' I replied, without a second thought. 'London, we are from London', Joe corrected me. Both the lady and I were surprised at his answer. 'Oh, no, I meant, where are you originally from?' the lady asked again. Joe hesitated for a few seconds, and explained, 'That's China then, but I have been living in London for most of my life.' The lady's reply – 'Right. Your English is pretty good.' – indicated that she was satisfied with Joe's answer this time. Feeling awkward, Joe did not respond to the lady's compliment that he was able to communicate fluently in his primary language. When the lady had left, I asked Joe with some irony, 'So, was there a problem admitting that you're from China?' He paused, perplexed, and shrugged his shoulders, 'Of course not. I don't know why I said that. It's just complicated.'

Seemingly simple questions such as 'Where are you from?' and 'Who are you?' can easily puzzle many people in countless ways throughout the world. This illustrates their struggles with imposed categorizations and the ambiguous relationships they have with their ethno-cultural origins and place of settlement. Responses to these questions can conjure up a multitude of possibilities, depending on the context, the enquirer and the way in which

these questions were asked. However, the seemingly limitless options for identities are subject to structural factors such as ethnic ancestry, migratory status, class, gender, age and even length of settlement. In this process of negotiating identities, individuals may actively assert that with which they want to be identified, such as Joe proclaiming his attachment to London in spite of the fact that he was born in China and has a Chinese physiological appearance. Meanwhile, individuals are also consciously or unconsciously shaped by ascribed social stereotypical expectations, as when the lady with the dog questioned Joe about his origins and I mocked his attempt to dissociate himself from China. The urge that Joe felt to explain his life history to a stranger is precisely because of these powerfully embedded social categorizations based on geographical locations and racial appearance. This small incident motivated me sufficiently to explore further an enquiry into British Chinese cultural identities. Over the years of my research, my personal investment in this project became increasingly significant when I married a British Chinese man and gave birth to my son, who is also 'British Chinese'. Born and raised in China, I am interested to see how young Chinese living outside China imagine, identify with or react against my homeland and its culture. Living with my Chinese-born and British-raised husband, I witnessed the confusions and struggles as well as the pride and aspirations of being a young Chinese person in Britain. Bringing up my British-born son, I am eager to make sense of what 'Chineseness' may mean for future generations of Chinese in Britain.

Certain research interests and questions have arisen from several years of personal, professional and intellectual engagement with the British Chinese community. These interests and insights directed my attention to a range of literature, which further deepened my understanding of the research questions and clarified my research aims. This study explores the complex process of (re)constructing cultural identities among British Chinese young people aged 13-18, in and around London. To explore cultural identities is not only to analyse the broad issues of who one identifies with and where one belongs to, but more importantly, to excavate multi-layered meanings of, in Stuart Hall's (1990, 1991b, 1996a) terms, 'belonging', 'being' and 'becoming' in specific contexts. More specifically, this thesis investigates the constant

negotiations between individual agencies and structural constraints in the everyday lives of these young people, from which their fluid, multi-faceted and situational cultural identities are constructed, deconstructed and re-formed. This chapter sets out the background to the research and clarifies the research themes and key questions. It also outlines the structure of this thesis with a brief description of the purpose and content of each chapter.

## **1.2 Background**

The Chinese population in Britain was once dominated by people hailing from a few concentrated areas in Guangdong or Hong Kong before the 1980s. Sharing close familial and territorial ties, this community was once portrayed as culturally homogenous and harmonious, guided by strong Chinese cultural values and practices (Watson, 1977; Chau & Yu, 2001). Since the 1980s, however, Chinese migration into Britain has presented new characteristics, and from the 1990s, the Chinese immigrant population increased rapidly both in terms of numbers and the rate of increase. This new migratory wave is no longer from Hong Kong but comprise people whose family origins lie in other regions of China. The majority among these new immigrants can be characterized as highly educated professionals and skilled workers. Many were able to move beyond the catering trade, which was often seen as the stereotypical business profile of the Chinese diaspora. The demographic changes are also reflected in the dynamics of the British Chinese community: differences and tensions emerged between sub-groups formed by class, region and age; new forms of economic, social and cultural capitals were introduced and utilized by British Chinese families; and traditional Chinese cultural values, practices and identifications were contested inter-generationally. The issues concerning the migration and settlement of Chinese in Britain are discussed in Chapter 2 to help illustrate the complex historical transformations from homogeneity towards heterogeneity within the British Chinese community.

British views on China and Chinese people have gone through many changes and taken many forms over the last 300 years. Some perspectives are distorted by racist imaginations, while others reflect the transformation of China and the Chinese diaspora over time. Among these representations in

Britain, there have been two salient and contradictory modes of representation of China and the Chinese. Early descriptions of China in the sixteenth century represented China as a rich and powerful country, while the Chinese were presented as clever and ambitious people with the potential to conquer based upon the ancient exploits of Genghis Khan – the myth of the Asian hordes. Other accounts portrayed China as uncivilized and the Chinese as passive and unapproachable ‘barbarians’ with ‘the grossest simplicity and ignorance’ (Benton & Gomez, 2008, p. 286). In the nineteenth century, two views of China ran parallel when imperial Britain tried to open up the Chinese market. Unknown to the world, China as a society was understood as closed, harmonious, orderly and moral. Meanwhile, a Sinophobic view also started to spread and the idea of the ‘Yellow Peril’ emerged, depicting China and Japan as a deadly threat capable of overwhelming white Europeans (Waller, 1985). During World War II, China’s battles with Japan positioned China as one of Britain’s allies in the fight against fascism. However, China’s Civil War of 1945-1949 and the subsequent Cold War created a new fear of ‘red’ Communist China. These opposing views were extended to the Chinese diaspora in Britain. On the one hand, Chinese in Britain were seen as well-mannered and hard-working citizens. The Chinese community was seen as a model minority,<sup>1</sup> ‘culturally programmed for economic success’, and an invisible minority, enclosed and trouble free (Kibria, 2002, p. 11). On the other hand, Chinese entrepreneurs and labour migrants were seen as canny and unscrupulous competitors to white labour. Chinatown was seen as a ‘mysterious, vice-ridden and dangerous’ place (O’Neill, 1972, p. 53).

Under the impact of globalization and intensified intercultural communication and interactions, these contrasting representations have persisted into contemporary discourses concerning ‘China and the Chinese’ in the UK. Since the late 1980s, representations of China have undergone a transformation around the world following its accelerated economic growth and transformed national political image. China is now recognised as a new global power within British public discourse. Nevertheless, China has is still often seen as a country troubled by problems such as pollution, corruption and inequality. One example is the BBC documentary *The Chinese Are Coming*<sup>2</sup>, broadcast in 2011, which investigated the spread of Chinese

influence around the world. It represented China as the world's economic superpower that had spread its footprint to Africa, Brazil, America and Europe. It also warned, by its suggestive title, how quickly these allegedly profit-orientated, hard-working and unscrupulous Chinese businessmen and workers could out-compete and out-perform local workers and 'take over the world'.

These varied powerful discourses have shaped the ways in which 'China and the Chinese' are perceived and how British Chinese identities came to be constructed. Thus, the exploration of cultural identities of diasporic youth starts from investigating how the collective memory of their ethnic and cultural origin has been 'fractured' (Appadurai & Breckenridge, 1989, p. i) and then recreated to suit new aspirations in the place of settlement. The relevant theoretical tools and concepts of 'diaspora' and 'transnationalism' are discussed in Chapter 4.

The topic that draws most public and academic attention towards British Chinese young people is their high academic achievement at school. Over the years, British Chinese pupils have been reported as the best performing ethnic group in GCSE and A-level exams at school, regardless of their gender and their family's socio-economic background. Chinese pupils in Shanghai came top in the PISA (Program of International Student Assessment) examinations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) International tests in 2009 and 2012 (Coughlan, 2012, 2013). These phenomena have inspired many researchers to explore the cultural reasons behind this academic excellence, such as parenting styles, the Confucian philosophy of hard work, discipline, and the desirable value of obedience (Lin & Fu, 1990; Okagaki & Frensch, 1998; Francis & Archer, 2005b). The perceptions of Chinese pupils as 'study machines' or 'mathematics geeks' have in turn influenced the ways in which school-aged British Chinese perceive themselves as pupils and children. Chapter 8 demonstrates how the schooling experiences of British Chinese pupils are entangled with these prevalent discourses within the British Chinese community and stereotypes in mainstream society.

The real economic and social changes in China, together with the changing discourses about 'China and the Chinese' have impacted upon the British Chinese community. In Chinese complementary schools, Mandarin has started to take over from Cantonese as the politically and economically dominant language. All Chinese complementary schools in Britain that once taught only Cantonese have now started to offer Mandarin classes, yet none of the Mandarin complementary schools teach Cantonese (W. Li & Wu, 2009). Furthermore, this trend for learning Mandarin has not only influenced the British Chinese community but also spread to mainstream British society. Learning Mandarin and relevant cultural exchange activities with China receive institutional support from both Chinese and British government and educational institutions (W. Li & Zhu, 2010). The updated UK primary National Curriculum, which took effect in 2014, listed Mandarin as one of the compulsory foreign language courses in primary schools.<sup>3</sup> These demographic and discourse changes have brought opportunities as well as challenges to the Chinese complementary schools and to teachers and pupils in these schools. Chapter 9 discusses the learning experiences and social activities of British Chinese pupils in Chinese complementary schools.

Apart from ethnicity and familial cultural heritage, this study also recognises that cultural identities are multi-faceted and influenced by other factors such as age, gender and socio-economic status. Hence, this study uses the term 'cultural identity' rather than 'ethnic identity'. The detailed theoretical framework and key concepts related to the concept of cultural identity are discussed in Chapter 3. Often portrayed as the 'model minority', British Chinese young people have at time been almost invisible within youth culture in Britain. Residing in the Greater London area, young people in this study are not only Chinese but also young consumers of hybrid global popular culture facilitated by fast-developing media, internet and information technology. Chapter 7 explores the media consumption of British Chinese young people and its impact on the formation of their cultural identities. The investigation of cultural identities among British Chinese young people interrogates the meanings of 'Chineseness' for these young people's lives and the impact these meanings can have on their hopes and choices for the future (discussed in Chapter 10). As Ang suggested,

Chineseness is not a category with a fixed content – be it racial, cultural, or geographical – but operates as an open and indeterminate signifier whose meanings are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated in different sections of the Chinese diaspora.

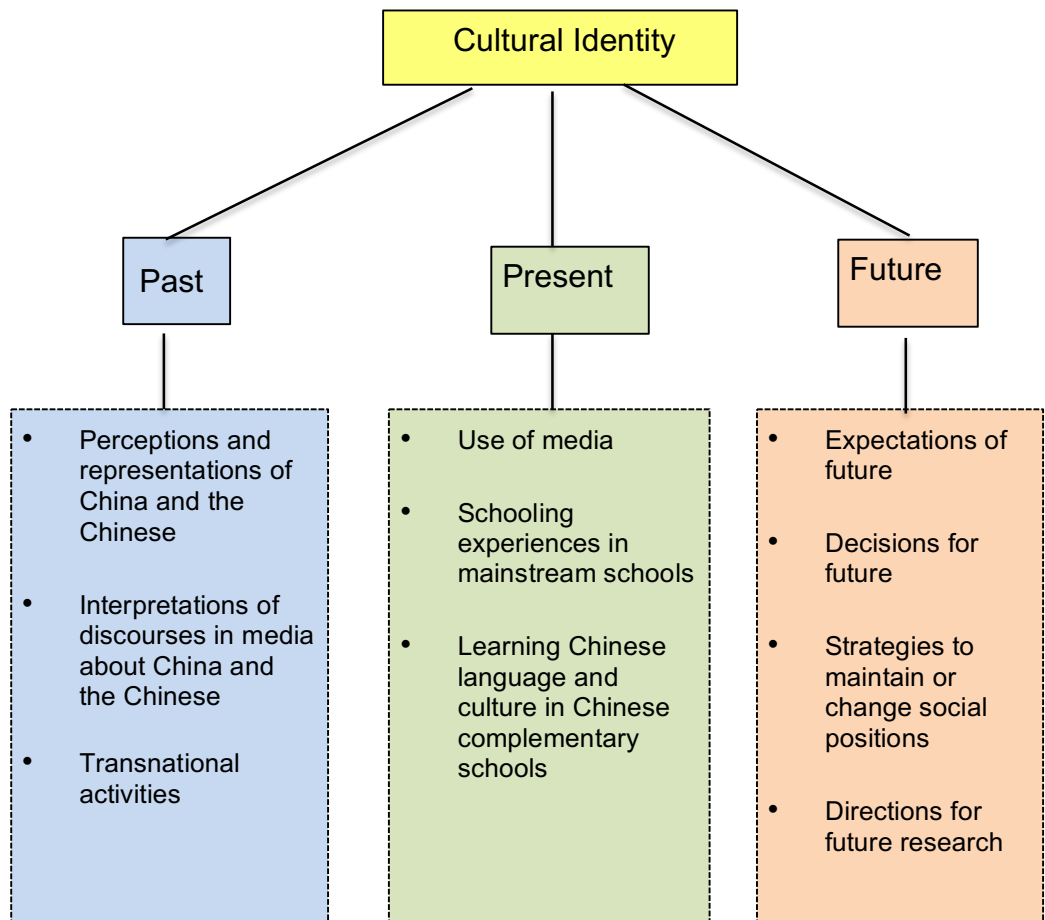
(1998, p. 225)

This study explores how the meanings of ‘Chineseness’ in this particular group of the diaspora is manipulated in different contexts; translating into the expectations of ‘model minority’; the necessity to learn Chinese language and culture; and options for life choices in the future. These contested meanings may generate both constraints and advantages for British Chinese young people. The innovative ways in which British Chinese young people reproduce and recreate the meanings of ‘Chineseness’ in different contexts demonstrate the multiple ways of living as a young Chinese person in Britain.

### **1.3 Research dimensions and questions**

This study investigates the cultural identities of British Chinese young people in the context of three dimensions (see Figure 1). The following analysis is structured in time in order to introduce the temporal dimensions. This serves to historicize the discussion and analysis. Thus for analytical convenience I have used the past-present-future categorizations while fully recognizing that these necessarily interconnect and co-exist in real time and space.





**Figure 1: Dimensions for the Research**

I examine British Chinese young people's relationship with their cultural and ethnic origins often transmitted through their family heritage. This directs the attention to family migratory history. A focus of this dimension is on how the migratory background and diasporic heritage have influenced the participants' current lives and identities. The examination of pasts enables the research to critically consider the perceptions of British Chinese young people and the way they construct representations of 'China and the Chinese'. It also allows for a focus upon how participants interpret media discourses relating to 'China and the Chinese'. I investigate aspects of their transnational experiences through their consumption of forms of media and through their transnational visits to their parent's places of origin. This analysis sets out to uncover the extent to which young people's perceptions and transnational experiences contribute towards shaping their cultural identities. This cluster of issues has developed into the focus of the first research question:

**Research question 1:** What is the relationship between British Chinese young people and the cultural and ethnic origins of their families? How does this relationship contribute to the construction of their cultural identities?

The second temporal dimension, broadly described as ‘the present’ focuses on the current or recent lived experiences of being a British Chinese young person in Britain. This had led to the second research questions.

Research question 2: How do the varied meanings of being ‘British Chinese’ operate in practice in different contexts; and how, and under what circumstances, do these young people construct aspects of their identities utilizing discourses and resources available to them by asserting their ‘differences’ or ‘sameness’ in relation to a particular group?

This strand of investigation and analysis focuses on aspects of the lives of British Chinese young people in relation to the social and cultural fields of media and education. The first sub-theme within the dimension of ‘the present’ sets out to examine British Chinese young people’s use of the mainstream, ethnic and transnational media, seeking to identify how these young people draw upon symbolic resources from such sources to construct their identities. The second sub-theme explores the schooling experiences of British Chinese young people in mainstream English schools under the impact of different discourses in this field. The third sub-theme explores British Chinese pupils’ experiences of learning Chinese language and culture in weekend Chinese language schools and the impact of these upon the construction of distinctively British Chinese identities.

The third dimension, broadly categorized for the sake of analysis, is described as the ‘future’. This considers the possible prospects and positioning of British Chinese young people in Britain. This directs attention towards enquiries about the hopes and expectations of British Chinese young people and their parents, their decisions and investment based on these expectations, and the benefits and problems of these expectations and actions for British Chinese young people. This theme leads to the final research question:

**Research question 3:** How do British Chinese young people and their parents perceive the positioning and the prospects of the younger generation of British Chinese?

It is worth noticing that the specific perceptions and experiences of each participant may vary considerably. However, the guiding thread throughout the research process is to grasp points of connection and mutual identity of the 'British Chinese' alongside their individual differences and to acknowledge these differences within perceptions of 'sameness'. Studying the temporal dimensions to experiences and perceptions of their past, present and future sheds light on their changing positions and representations of themselves in different contexts, especially in relation to their cultural identities. The research structure is represented below.

#### **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis consists of three main sections. Chapters 2 to 4 provide review of literature offering both an historical and theoretical context for the study. Here I discuss key concepts and develop the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter 5 outlines the methodology employed for this research. Chapters 6 to 11 analyse empirical data, respond to relevant theoretical debates, and discuss implications and directions for future research.

Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of the migration and settlement of Chinese people in Britain. Recent changes within the British Chinese community deserve wider public and scholarly attention to explore the changing cultural identities and life experiences of British Chinese young people. The key issue discussed in this chapter is that the new wave of Chinese migration, together with the emergence of China as an economic and political superpower, have brought changes to the Chinese community in Britain. The Chinese family catering business is no longer the predominant reference point for understanding the lives and cultural identities of British Chinese young people. This chapter also outlines the theoretical background and key themes in studies of British Chinese young people.

Chapter 3 establishes the theoretical foundation for the current study by critically reviewing the contested concepts of 'identity', 'culture' and 'cultural identity'. This chapter constructs the theoretical framework based on a synthesis of the theories proposed by Stuart Hall (1990, 1991b, 1996a) and Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1986, 1992, 2002) (see Figure 5 in Chapter 3). This framework guides the present study to examine the ways in which the cultural identities of British Chinese are (re)constructed in both discourse and practices, in relation to their ethnic/cultural origin, their current positioning in different fields, and their expectations of the future.

Chapter 4 places young people at the centre of the discussions of migration, diaspora and transnationalism and highlights recent debates within these fields. It acknowledges the symbolic and normative significance of the 'homeland' in shaping the identities and lives of migrants, but also raises questions about the 'thickness' and 'viability' (Alba & Nee, 1997) of transnational ties among the second and subsequent generations of immigrants. While existing studies of school-aged British Chinese pupils mainly focus on their academic performance, this study proposes to examine their relationship with media and global youth culture in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their lives.

Chapter 5 explains the rationale of the methodology and the choices of methods in this study, highlighting the problems and challenges in the field that led to the use of a mixed-methods research design with an emphasis on the researcher's reflexivity. The integration of qualitative and quantitative methods and the triangulation of verbal, statistical and visual data are discussed in detail in the process of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 6 explores the ways in which British Chinese young people perceive their ethnic and cultural origin through their verbal descriptions, interpretations of media portrayal and visual representations of 'China and the Chinese'. It is a process whereby the meanings of 'Chineseness' are contested and the sense of belonging is negotiated. Their transnational visits and familial cultural upbringing, together with the various discourses about 'China and the

Chinese', all contribute to their perceptions and relationships with their ethnic and cultural origins, which in turn further influence their identities.

Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, Chapter 7 presents the media use patterns of British Chinese young people. These young people's consumption of mainstream media is analysed in reference to the media use pattern of average British young people in similar age groups. This chapter also discusses these young people's consumption of East Asian popular cultural media products such as Korean dramas and Japanese animations via the internet. It finally examines their use of Chinese ethnic media products and the impact of these transnational media consumption activities on their construction of identities.

Chapter 8 examines British Chinese pupils' learning experiences and social activities in mainstream schools in and around London. The emphasis here lies with reporting the views and perceptions from the young participants. This chapter discusses the two prominent discourses, 'valuing education' and being 'well-behaved' (or dutiful and respectful), and the practice informed by these discourses among British Chinese families. While acknowledging that these discourses contributed to the high academic aspiration and performance of British Chinese pupils, this chapter highlights the negative impact it may have on these young people. This chapter also investigates British Chinese pupils' responses to the stereotypes of British Chinese pupils as a 'model minority' with high grades and 'good' behaviour in schools. The findings of this chapter present the contested meanings of 'Chineseness' in mainstream schools, the frustration and struggles young people experienced, and the strategies they adopted in their encounters with these discourses and stereotypes.

Chapter 9 investigates the learning experiences and the peer social interactions of British Chinese young people in London Chinese complementary schools. This chapter specifically focuses on learning Chinese culture through Chinese cultural activities in these schools. Their responses to different cultural activities disclose young people's varied attitudes towards Chinese culture and their situated positioning in relation to

learning the Chinese language and culture. The findings demonstrate both benefits and challenges in the current provision of Chinese education in community language schools. This chapter also outlines the social functions of Chinese complementary schools for British Chinese teachers, parents and pupils and highlights the segregations and tensions among sub-groups within Chinese community in Britain.

Chapter 10 invites British Chinese young people to locate their origin, label their own cultural identifications, and describe their future through responding to questions, such as 'Where are you from?'; 'Who are you: British, Chinese, British Chinese or other?' and 'What are your career choices?' Their narratives of self-identification in relation to their ethno-cultural origins, present lives and hopes for the future, echo the findings discussed in Chapters 6 to 9, demonstrating a complex process of representing, negotiating and recreating cultural identities.

Chapter 11 draws together the arguments from previous chapters and discusses the insights this study has gained using the theoretical framework and methodology. The final section of this chapter discusses the limitations of this study and presents possibilities for future research.

British Chinese young people form the centre of this thesis. From these young people's perspective, this thesis recorded and discussed their experiences and self-identifications as diasporic members, pupils in schools and young consumers of media and youth culture. From this process it demonstrated the complexity and fluidity of cultural identities, the contested meanings of 'Chinese' and 'British', and the multiple possibilities of being 'British Chinese' in Britain.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Chinese in Britain: Migration, Settlement and Identity**

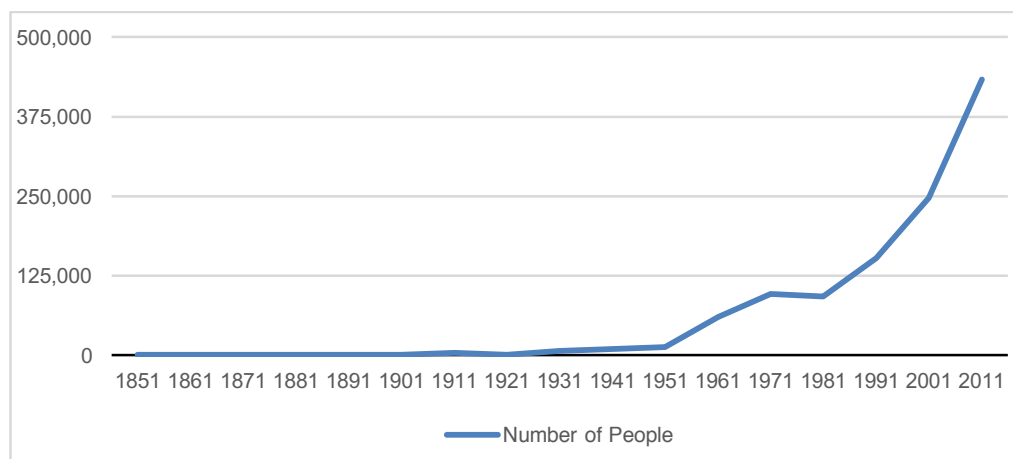
#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter traces the historical footprints of Chinese migrants in Britain, outlines the settlement and evolution of the British Chinese community, and reviews relevant research into the cultural identities of British Chinese young people. It firstly examines the patterns of Chinese migration to Britain. The population, purposes and routes of each migratory wave are analysed in the context of the specific socio-economic environments and migration policies of Britain and China. The recent migrant wave highlights new features and increasing diversity within the British Chinese community. The second part focuses on the settlement and evolution of the British Chinese community in London, where one third of the British Chinese population reside. This part also provides an overview of ethnic Chinese media and Chinese complementary language schools in Britain. The final section reviews key studies in the last two decades exploring the life experiences and cultural identities of British Chinese young people, provoking new questions and highlighting new research directions in this field.

#### **2.2 Migration patterns of the Chinese in Britain**

The Chinese presence in Britain can be traced back to the beginning of trade links between Britain and China in the early nineteenth century. Figure 2 (below) and Table 10 (see Appendix) show the population growth of Chinese in Britain from 1851–2011. Figures before the 1991 census are rather speculative because they record only the country of birth and ignore ethnic origin (Benton & Gomez, 2008). In the 1991 census, which for the first time included a question on ethnic origin with a 'Chinese' category on a 100% count, the Chinese population in Britain is recorded at 152,900. The Chinese constituted the smallest of seven 'pre-coded' ethnic groups, at 0.29% of the national total. The 2001 census showed a persistent and substantial increase of the Chinese population both in absolute numbers and proportionate to other ethnicities. The 2001 census reported a Chinese population of 247,403, which equates to 0.43% of the British total and 5.3% of all ethnic minorities. In

the latest census in 2011, the population of Chinese had risen to 433,150, which is 0.7% of the British total and 5.3% of all ethnic minorities. Although the overall percentage of the population formed by the Chinese ethnic group remains low, it is characterized by a high percentage increase of 183% from 1991 to 2011. Moreover, a rise in unskilled illegal migrants and over-stayers who seek subsequent naturalization has been reported. This type of migration has increased the absolute number of Chinese in Britain but tends not to appear in official figures (Benton & Gomez, 2008).



**Figure 2: Population of Chinese in Britain from 1851 to 2011**

Source: Various sources selected from Table 10 in Appendix.

According to the literature on Chinese migration to Britain, there have been three waves of migration from the nineteenth century to the present day. The first wave started in the second half of the nineteenth century; the second wave in the post-war period; and the third wave, since the 1980s, brought the majority of today's Chinese population to Britain (Luk, 2008).

### **2.2.1 The first wave 1840–1945**

Prior to the nineteenth century, several individual Chinese arrived in Britain as visitors. But these early Chinese visitors were largely invisible in Britain. The tiny number of early Chinese travellers (not yet migrants) reflects the Chinese government's hostile attitudes toward emigration and overseas Chinese (Nyíri, 2002).



China's defeat in the Opium Wars (1839–1843 and 1856–1860) forced the opening up of China as a trading zone for British merchants and increased the demand for Chinese seafarers. The East India Company, which exercised a monopoly over the China trade, brought the first wave of Chinese seafarers to Britain. In this period, the overwhelming majority of Chinese came to Britain as *Huagong* (华工, contract emigrant labourers). The recruited *Huagong* were exclusively male Chinese nationals, mostly from the Guangdong area in southeast China. In World War I, many tens of thousands of Chinese contract labourers were recruited by the British, French and Russian allies to work as battlefield ancillaries. Nearly all were poor and illiterate and their journeys abroad were not planned (Benton & Gomez, 2008). The recorded Chinese population in the early migratory wave of Chinese to Britain was small (see Figure 2), primarily because it was extremely difficult to register a seafaring population accurately. After the war, a great majority of *Huagong* returned home, but others stayed and clustered together, forming the early Chinese communities in the port cities of London, Liverpool and Cardiff (G. Wang, 1991). Most of these contract labourers were from Siyi 四邑<sup>4</sup> area in Guangdong. It has been argued that Siyi was the biggest single source of early Chinese emigration to Britain, and the Siyinese remained the main Chinese group in Britain until World War II (Hu, 1989). Siyinese and other migrants from Guangdong mainly engaged in three lines of business in Britain and other countries around the world: market-gardening; laundry; and the fast-food trade (Benton & Gomez, 2008).

The second group of Chinese migrating to Britain in this period were known as *Huaqiao* 华侨, well-educated Chinese migrants including officials, journalists and students. Threatened by the two Opium Wars, the Qing courts (1644–1911) selected well-educated young Chinese to study in America, Japan and Europe to 'learn foreign technology to fight against foreign invasion' (师夷长技以制夷). Strongly tied to nation building, some aspects of this migration pattern survive today (G. Wang, 1991). Chinese governments, from the Qing, the Republic of China (ROC) (1912–1949) and the later People's Republic of China (PRC) (1949–now), all recognised education abroad as an opportunity for self-development, but more importantly, for the

purpose of developing China economically and politically, and promoting Chinese culture. In Britain, these young migrant students were attracted to London and the major university towns. Most of them returned home after they had qualified, but a small number settled in Britain permanently (G. Wang, 1991).

### **2.2.2 The second wave 1945–1980**

During World War II, thousands of Chinese seafarers were recruited to support British sea crews. Unlike the earlier Cantonese seafarers, these were mainly from east China around the Yangtze Delta and beyond. Hundreds of these labourers were either killed in the war or deported soon after, and only a small number stayed in Britain (Benton & Gomez, 2008).

In 1949, the Chinese Communist party took over the Kuomintang government of ROC in China. The Kuomintang government fled to Taiwan and its residual authority of the ROC has since been limited to the island of Taiwan. This political disjuncture has complicated the stratification of the Chinese diaspora until the present day. Chinese migrants from Taiwan have in many cases been categorized as Chinese migrants in the global migration context. However, few migrants from Taiwan would identify themselves politically or even culturally with the Mainland Chinese. In the 1950s and 1960s, when the PRC banned dual citizenship and severely restricted foreign travel, Chinese migrants from Taiwan constituted a major proportion of Chinese emigrants to the rest of the world (Kwong, 1996; Nyíri, 2002).

The new influx of Chinese immigrants into post-war Britain, however, was mainly derived from traditional farming families from villages of the New Territories in Hong Kong. When Britain resumed their colonial rule in Hong Kong in 1945, following Japanese occupation, many Chinese people claimed Hong Kong provenance and gained the right to live in Britain. Unlike early Chinese migrants who were forced to emigrate as a result of foreign aggression and domestic troubles, the New Territories villagers were voluntary migrants who moved to Britain for economic reasons. Most of these Cantonese or Hakka-speaking villagers were illiterate, with virtually no English, but they had a 'sojourner's dream': to work hard and save diligently

abroad, then to re-join their families in their homeland for a life of peace and comfort (Watson, 1977). Quite a few of these Chinese sojourners were slowly transformed to settlers as they developed new roots and made Britain their home, building up the Chinese population in Britain to around 60,000 in the 1960s (see Table 10 and Figure 2).

British nationality law<sup>5</sup> between 1962 and 1981 tightened immigration by non-white Commonwealth citizens, including the Hong Kong Chinese. When Chinese take-away restaurants became popular in Britain in the 1960s, the labour shortage that resulted from the curb on immigration contributed to delaying the growth in the restaurant trade. The main result was a temporary boom in secondary immigration, meaning immigration by wives and other dependents of existing immigrants (Benton & Gomez, 2008). In addition, Chinese restaurant owners in Britain imported around 10,000 'stateless Chinese'<sup>6</sup> between 1962 and 1973 (Watson, 1977, p. 181). These later achieved settlement and were thought to have formed as much as one-sixth or more of Britain's Chinese population (Watson, 1977, p. 188).

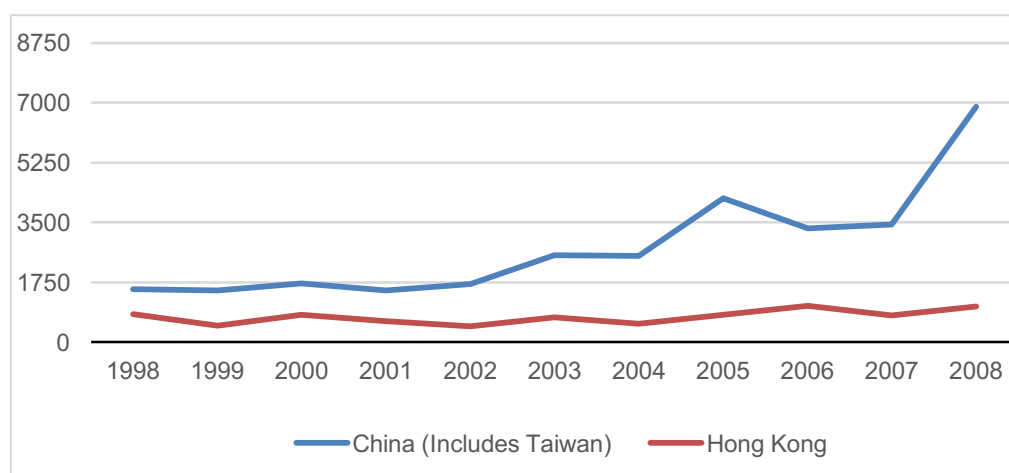
Furthermore, ethnic Chinese migrants from countries outside China have been arriving into Britain over the past hundred years. Vietnamese Chinese refugees have contributed to the increase of the ethnic Chinese population as a result of the Vietnam War in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Many of the refugees were either twice migrants from China (those who had migrated and settled in Vietnam, then re-migrated to Britain) or had a Chinese ancestral background (Chang, 1968). They were mainly farmers, fishermen or worked in craft trades with little or no formal schooling. With a lack of qualifications or experience of mainstream work, many Vietnamese remained unemployed or restricted to working as assistants in Chinese restaurants and clothes factories (Shang, 1984).

### **2.2.3 The third wave 1980–present: new Chinese migrants**

A dramatic change to the pattern of Chinese migration pattern was brought about by the 1978 'Open up' policy (改革开放政策) of the PRC government. Since then, the PRC has actively supported migration through various political decisions, organisations and activities. As a result, millions of migrants have

left China to study, join relatives, work or trade abroad. The term ‘New (Chinese) Migrants’ (新移民) is used most often instead of ‘overseas Chinese’ (华侨 *huaqiao*) or ‘ethnic Chinese’ (华人 *huaren*), to encompass the Chinese who, since the early 1980s, left China to settle elsewhere ‘regardless of their purpose, legal status and citizenship’ (Thunø, 2007, p. 3).

Figure 2 in the beginning of this section shows a substantial increase in Chinese migration to Britain since the 1980s. The dominant group of Chinese immigrants in Britain started to change from Hong Kong Chinese to Chinese from all other parts of China. As shown in Figure 3 below and Table 11 in Appendix, the decline in Hong Kong Chinese immigration since the 1990s was in contrast with recent growth of immigrants from China (Luk, 2008).



**Figure 3: Grants of settlement from 1997 to 2008**

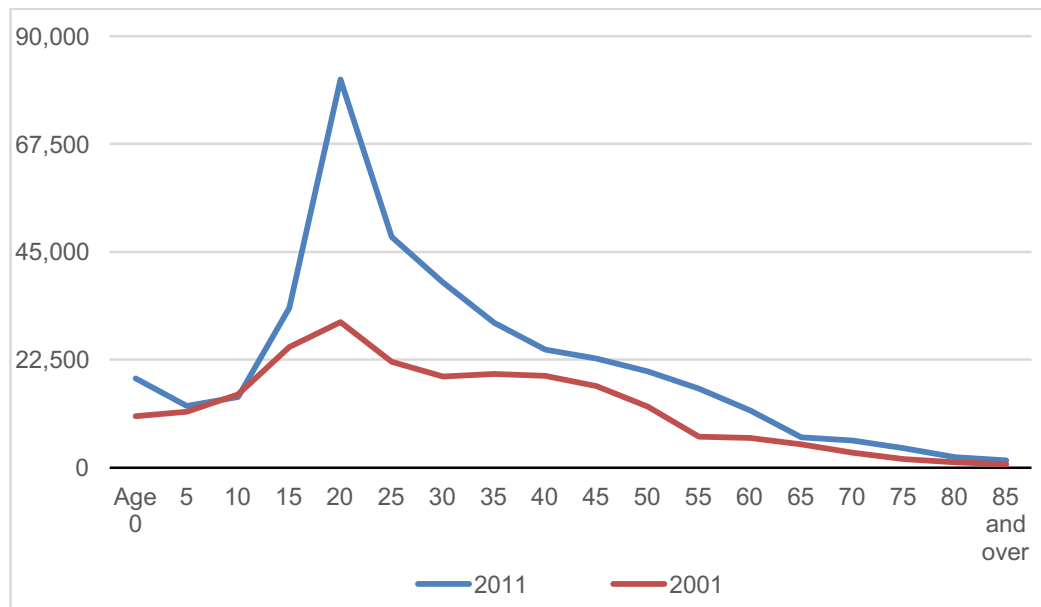
Source: Data extracted from Annual Abstract of Statistics, Office of National Statistics (various years). For detailed data see Table 11 in Appendix.

The period 1980–2003 recorded a total of 26,620 Hong Kong Chinese settling in Britain (Luk, 2008, p. 265). At the beginning of the 1980s, migration from Hong Kong was dwindling, primarily because of the saturation of the Chinese restaurant business and the more restrictive regulations in the UK on the entry of dependents and new spouses in the 1970s. The figure climbed once again during the late 1980s and early 1990s, attributable to the perceived political uncertainties stimulated by the change of governance of Hong Kong from Britain to the PRC in 1997 (Luk, 2008). Hong Kong immigrants in this period, unlike the poor and unskilled ‘old’ immigrants, were often well

educated, highly skilled and with 'considerable wealth that allows them to survive and thrive in Britain' (Luk, 2008, p. 266). This second influx of Hong Kong immigrants was, however, short-lived. In fact, many returned to Hong Kong after securing a UK passport.

From the 1980s, an increasing number of PRC residents began to go overseas, in small numbers at first, growing significantly from the mid-1990s. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the PRC had become a major source of migrants to Britain. The majority of the new Chinese migrants are students and skilled workers. The influx of these Chinese students has contributed towards the overall growth of the UK Chinese population. In the past few years, China has become the top sending country of international students in British higher education, with a population as high as 89,540 in 2014–2015.<sup>7</sup> Many of these Chinese students have become permanent residents in the UK. The children of these 'new immigrants' since the 1980s comprise the majority of the research participants in this project.

With the influx of young students and middle-aged skilled workers, the age distribution of the Chinese in Britain became highly uneven (see Figure 4 below and Table 12 in Appendix). In 2001, 17.81% of Chinese in England and Wales were between the ages of 10 and 19, 23.12% between 20 and 29, and 17% between 30 and 39. Ten years later, nearly one third of Chinese (32.85%) in England and Wales are between the ages of 20 and 29, 12.23% aged 10–19 and 17.5% aged 30–39. Unlike the first two waves of Chinese migration, which were dominated by males, the male and female ratio became more balanced at 1.05 in 2001 and 1.08 in 2011.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 4: Chinese population by age in England and Wales, 2001 and 2011**

Source: Data extracted from 2001 and 2011 UK census, details see Table 12 in Appendix.

As seen in the first two migration waves, Chinese migration to the UK was once dominated by people from small areas in China, firstly Siyi in Guangdong, then Hong Kong and the New Territories. They formed close sub-ethnic connections based on familial or territorial ties. With its historic connections with Hong Kong, the Chinese community in Britain was once uniform and more stable than the Chinese populations of many other countries, even with sub-ethnic differences (Benton & Gomez, 2008). Since the 1980s the rapidly increasing number of 'new Chinese immigrants' has brought great diversity to the British Chinese community. The majority of new Chinese migrants in Britain are students or skilled workers from HK, China or Southeast Asia. They are mostly from major urban cities in China and are highly educated, but they are not necessarily connected to other previous Chinese migrant groups. They have been able to go beyond working in the catering businesses, and have moved into a variety of other sectors and industries. Being educated past the basic level and having a higher proficiency in English, these 'new,' white-collar Chinese immigrants often have more in common with the British middle class than those migrants who came from HK and Vietnam in the 1960s and '70s, or those who were illegal immigrants from rural areas of China.

Meanwhile, the issue of illegal immigrants from China drew the attention of the British public at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In June 2000, fifty-eight Chinese people travelling from Fujian,<sup>9</sup> died of mass suffocation in the back of a lorry as it was carried on a cross-channel ferry to enter the UK illegally.<sup>10</sup> Historically, Fujian is second to Guangdong as a source of Chinese emigration. At the end of the 1990s, a large number of Fujianese Chinese settled in the UK. Most are illegal immigrants from disadvantaged backgrounds (Benton & Gomez, 2008). Many of the illegal immigrants are socially excluded and particularly vulnerable to exploitation by their own countrymen and British people alike (Benton & Pieke, 1998). These issues were starkly highlighted through the investigations into the deaths of at least twenty-one Chinese cockle-pickers in the Morecombe Bay disaster of 2004.<sup>11</sup> The lives of these illegal immigrants and their children are drastically different from those of well-educated and financially secure students and skilled workers. As Nyíri (1999) points out, class differences have begun to eclipse sub-ethnic differences among Chinese migrants. Chapter 9 discusses in more detail the class differences and social segregation within the British Chinese community. The changing Chinese migration patterns in Britain suggest that the British Chinese community is far from a seemingly harmonious and homogenous group. In addition, the rising economic significance of China and the influence of globalization also shape the Chinese migration experience. The present study aims to understand the changing experiences and identities of the children of these new Chinese immigrants in Britain.

## **2.3 The Chinese community in Britain**

### **2.3.1 Settlement**

The Chinese population in Britain is characterized by uneven distribution across the country. Chinese settlement is highly concentrated in the southeast of England but widely dispersed in other parts of Britain (see Table 13 in Appendix). This settlement pattern has remained stable during the last two decades. From 1991 to 2011, almost 90% of Chinese in Britain lived in England. Almost one third of the Chinese population is concentrated in London (36.05% in 1991, 31.88% in 2001 and 28.75 in 2011). But in more recent years, there has been a tendency for the Chinese population to flow from densely populated areas to more remote regions.

It has been argued that the distribution pattern of the Chinese population in Britain is related to the occupational structure of the Chinese community (Benton & Gomez, 2008; Luk, 2008). During the early years of Chinese migration to Britain, Chinatowns in seaport cities acted as primary reception areas for the Chinese seafarers. Since the 1950s, the catering industry has been the predominant economic activity for Chinese immigrants (Waller, 1985). These family-run takeaway businesses and restaurants tend to be scattered throughout the country in order to avoid competition within the ethnic group (Luk, 2008). Here, I mainly discuss Chinese settlement in London, where my research is based.

The first London Chinese community was established soon after the arrival of Cantonese seamen in 1851. They initially settled and congregated in one street, Limehouse Causeway, in the docklands area of the East End of London. By 1880, the first small-scale Chinese community, known as the 'Chinese quarter' had formed in Limehouse. It was renowned for its opium dens (which were visited by Charles Dickens for his final and unfinished novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*), Chinese laundries and catering houses (Jones, 1979). The Limehouse Chinese community was largely obliterated during the London Blitz in World War II (Benton & Gomez, 2008). During the post-war years, a new Chinatown began to take shape around Gerrard Street in London's West End.

With the new migration wave since the 1980s, Chinese families are concentrated around business centres and good schools across London. Today, while the restaurant trade remains a fundamental component of Chinatown, a wide range of professional businesses have developed, ranging from financial and legal services, grocery stores and gift shops to entertainment and health services (Luk, 2008). Apart from Chinatown, London is also the centre of numerous British Chinese institutions, including voluntary associations, media, and schools. The following two sections specifically focus on the development of Chinese complementary language schools and ethnic Chinese media in Britain.



### **2.3.2 Chinese complementary language schools**

The earliest Chinese complementary schooling can be traced back to 1914 in London Chinatown (Benton & Gomez, 2008). Yet it was not until recently that researchers started to map the population and practice of Chinese complementary schooling in England (Archer, Francis, & Mau, 2009; Francis, Archer, & Mau, 2010; W. Li, 2006).

A substantial number of Chinese complementary schools in England were established in the 1970s, when an urgent need was created by the wave of post-war Chinese migration from Hong Kong. The majority of the Chinese complementary schools established at that time focused principally on teaching Cantonese and traditional characters rather than Mandarin and simplified characters (Francis, Archer, & Mau, 2009).<sup>12</sup> Since the 1980s, a series of newer schools have been formed to cater for the growing population of young British-born Chinese and new Chinese immigrant children. In 2012, the chairman of the UK Association for the Promotion of Chinese Education (UKAPCE), Wu Shanxiong, announced that there were more than 130 Chinese schools in the UK catering for some 25,000 students.<sup>13</sup> According to various sources,<sup>14</sup> there are thirty weekend Chinese community language schools in London.

Chinese schools are largely part-time, voluntary and charities. Being under-funded and under-resourced is a common problem for Chinese complementary schools which mainly rely upon a relatively low tuition fee (ranging from £15 to £90 a year), although some schools receive a small amount of funding from the UK government and donations from individuals or companies (Mau, et al., 2009). Most school classrooms are rented from mainstream schools or colleges, with limited access to teaching facilities such as computers, electronic whiteboards and projectors. Although different schools have different policies, textbooks, and pedagogical approaches, a common goal in their mission statement is to teach Chinese language and transmit Chinese culture to school-aged Chinese young people in Britain. The main classes in Chinese schools are dedicated to teaching Chinese language. The majority of schools teach Cantonese, although learning Mandarin is increasingly popular (W. Li & Zhu, 2010). The curriculum is

mainly delivered in Chinese while English is also employed. All schools also provide pre- or after-school classes related to Chinese cultural heritage, such as Chinese dance, calligraphy, and Kung Fu classes.

Most teachers are parents of school students or volunteers with limited formal teacher education or training either in the UK or abroad. Teaching practices vary across schools and often depend on individual teachers (Mau et al., 2009). The student population is overwhelmingly comprised of second-generation British Chinese children (Mau et al., 2009), but these schools also attract newly migrated Chinese children, third generation British Chinese and non-Chinese children (D. Wang, 2014). Apart from helping young people acquire practical language skills, these schools also create a social space for Chinese in Britain to meet and interact, which facilitates continued interaction with China. Chapter 9 explores the experiences of learning and social interactions of British Chinese young people in Chinese complementary schools.

### **2.3.3 Ethnic Chinese media in Britain**

As one of the themes of this study is to explore the British Chinese young people's use of ethnic Chinese media, this section provide an overview of the history and development of the ethnic Chinese media accessible in Britain. Given the long-standing history of Chinese migration in Britain, it is surprising that the first series of Chinese newspaper and periodicals were not published in the UK until the early twentieth century. The main reason was that Britain's Chinese population before this time was 'too small and poorly educated to support a voluminous press' (Benton & Gomez, 2008, p. 193). Chinese newspapers and periodicals published in Britain from the 1920s to the 1950s, such as 留英学报 (*The Journal of the Chinese Students' Union in Great Britain*) and 中华周报 (*Chinese News Weekly*), were mostly founded by Chinese students or intellectuals to discuss and criticize issues arising in war-time China. With the influx of Hong Kong Chinese in the 1960s, Hong Kong titles such as 香港商报 (*Hong Kong Commercial Daily*) and 大公报 (*Ta Kung Pao*), were imported to Britain for sale in the Chinese community. In 1975, the Hong Kong-based 星岛日报 (*Sing Tao Daily*) established outlets and editorial

offices in London, becoming the first localized Chinese newspaper in Britain carrying news and information relevant to settled Chinese immigrants. At present, *Sing Tao Daily* is the only Chinese daily in Britain, and also the only paid-for Chinese newspaper in Britain (Wei, 2013). In 1985 人民日报 (*People's Daily*), the official national newspaper of the PRC, started an overseas edition distributed in Europe and throughout the world, and since 2000, a number of free Chinese weeklies and periodicals such as 华商报 (*Chinese Business Gazette*) and 英中时报 (*UK-Chinese Times*) have entered the market.

Most Chinese newspapers are sold at Chinese shops and restaurants rather than by postal subscription. Therefore, their circulation is limited to areas surrounding Chinese businesses or community centres. Unlike ethnic Chinese newspapers in Southeast Asia or North America, they do not contribute systematically to constructing local identities (Benton & Gomez, 2008). The influence of these newspapers is also limited since most educated professionals and British-born Chinese tend to read British newspapers. My research (see Chapter 7) shows that few young Chinese immigrants or British-born Chinese regularly read ethnic Chinese newspapers.

Chinese TV products, on the other hand, are far more popular among young British Chinese. In the 1970s and the early 1980s, Chinese film weekends in Chinese restaurants and high street cinemas were very popular among British Chinese families. By the late 1980s, Cantonese videos imported from Hong Kong had taken over. As shown by Parker (1993), these videos displaying Hong Kong popular culture played a crucial role in the identity formation of young British Chinese at that time. Like the Hong Kong-based Chinese newspapers, most Chinese TV channels available in Britain are extensions of parent TV stations based in Hong Kong. The first Chinese TV channel, the 欧洲东方卫视 (Chinese News & Entertainment Channel), arrived in Britain in 1993; it became 凤凰卫视欧洲台 (European Phoenix Chinese News & Entertainment Channel) in 1999. The channel broadcasts its Chinese programmes in Mandarin 24/7 via satellite transponder to sixty countries and regions in Europe.<sup>15</sup> Another important Chinese satellite channel is 无线卫星台 (The Chinese Channel), whose parent company is Hong Kong Television

Broadcast Ltd (TVB). It broadcasts in both Cantonese and Mandarin to forty-eight countries in Europe.<sup>16</sup> In 2008, the mainland China-based Chinese Central TV (CCTV) launched its international channel (中国中央电视台国际频道) in six languages to 171 countries.

The rise of the internet has changed media communication since the 1990s. With the development of TV on the internet, Chinese people in Britain can access all TV channels from Hong Kong and Mainland China. Meanwhile, the emergence of online discussion sites, such as [www.britishbornchinese.org.uk](http://www.britishbornchinese.org.uk) and [www.dimsum.co.uk](http://www.dimsum.co.uk), produced by British Chinese young people has attracted attentions of researchers (Parker & Song, 2007). However, research is largely absent regarding how British Chinese young people use and respond to ethnic Chinese TV and websites. Dedicated to filling the gap in the literature, Chapter 7 discusses the media use patterns of British Chinese young people.

## **2.4 Key research about British Chinese young people**

The academic literature on Chinese people in Britain before the 1970s is scarce, scattered and often contradictory (W. Li, 1994). Much of the earlier work on Chinese in Britain (Watson, 1977; Shang, 1984; Pan, 1994 for example) focuses on describing how Chinese migrants in the 1960s adapted to their new life in Britain. These studies acknowledge the fact that these Chinese immigrants were predominantly employed in the catering trade, and hence assume that their lives and those of their offspring were determined by their occupations.

Since the 1990s, a handful of authors have explored specific issues surrounding ethnic Chinese in Britain. This section mainly reviews two groups of studies concerning British Chinese young people. The representatives of the first group are David Parker (1993, 1995, 2000), Miri Song (1995, 1997a, 1997b) and Kim Kiang Pang (1999), whose early work is ground-breaking for understanding second- and third-generation British Chinese young people, now in their twenties and thirties. Exploring the broad issues of race and identity construction, their research mainly speaks to the sociological community. Parker and Song's more recent work (2007, 2009), together with

other researchers (Bell, 2011; Yeh, 2000, 2014), explore the emerging 'British Chinese identity' in the global era. The second group of studies to review is grounded in educational settings and focuses specifically on school-aged British Chinese children. It looks into the learning experiences, parenting and gender/ethnic identities of young British Chinese in mainstream schools and complementary schools (Woodrow & Sham, 2001; Francis, Archer, & Mau, 2008; Lau, 2014).

#### **2.4.1 The cultural identities of Chinese in Britain**

Parker locates his own research in the sphere of cultural studies. He was one of the first researchers in Britain to theorize 'British Chinese identity'. He interrogates the 'static conception of culture' and hopes to establish the 'British Chinese identity' as an open category consisting of a range of experiences, rather than an unchanging and essentialist tag. His work highlights the cultural underpinning and symbolic importance of a family catering background in the lives of British Chinese young people. He portrays that the daily conflicts in the lives of these young people lie between the 'family obligations and expectations and the desire to move away from catering' (Parker, 1993, p. 264).

Miri Song also examines British Chinese identities with key reference to catering businesses. Song investigates the ways in which British Chinese young people and their families understand their roles as workers participating in family restaurants and takeaways (Song, 1997a). Song (1997b) also finds that children in the Chinese families that run takeaways are designated with 'good' or 'bad' qualities and cultural identities according to how much work they do for their parents in the catering business. Those children who do not help out in the takeaway are regarded as 'bad' and becoming 'more and more English'.

Pang (1999) goes further, asking how crucial the site of the Chinese takeaway is to individual subject formation. Pang's work offers a useful discussion on how Chinese children negotiate their roles with their parents and siblings in family businesses. Pang also identifies that the obligation to work takes a lot of the young people's free time and even becomes a barrier

to making friends or developing other social activities. He emphasises the differences in gender, geography, generation, age and class that simultaneously separate and lump together disparate groups of Chinese in Britain. However, this attempt is weakened by the fact that all of his informants are from London and most of their families own catering businesses.

Pang, Parker and Song analyse narratives and accounts of British Chinese young people in their twenties and thirties, looking back on their experiences growing up in Britain. They all emphasise the vital role of the family catering business in the formation of British Chinese cultural identities. They repeatedly confirm the image of Chinese in Britain in the later part of the twentieth century as mostly originating from rural areas of Hong Kong, geographically dispersed in Britain, heavily concentrated in the catering trade, lacking political representation and sharing neither religion nor British cultural forms to mark out a distinctive identity or public profile. They argue for the 'hybridization' of both Chinese and British cultures in the identities of younger generation of Chinese in Britain.

The present research aims to reflect changes in the lives of young Chinese in Britain with the influence of the new Chinese migration wave since the 1980s. This study does not assume there are radical differences between Hong Kong migrants and new migrants from different parts of China, between those socio-economically deprived and those with skills and wealth. However, it is noteworthy that the lived experiences, understandings of China and Chinese culture and self-identification are more diversified among new Chinese migrants and their children. As many British-born and new immigrant Chinese have entered white-collar and middle-class jobs and professions (Chau & Yu, 2001), the family catering business is no longer suitable as the sole reference in understanding the lives and identities of British Chinese young people.

Indeed, Parker and Song's recent collaborative work answers the need for consolidating British Chinese identities in the new era. It highlights the 'emergent British Chinese sensibility and identity' by examining two British Chinese websites, [www.BritishChineseOnline.com](http://www.BritishChineseOnline.com) and [www.dimsum.co.uk](http://www.dimsum.co.uk),

set up in 1999 and 2000 respectively (Parker & Song, 2007). Parker and Song conclude that such websites provide a key means for sharing experiences and social gathering online with other British-born Chinese people. Furthermore, they argue that participation on these sites creates an emergent British Chinese civil society as various political initiatives have been mobilized via these websites. While they see the emergence of such websites as indicative of the formation of a collective British Chinese identity, they also recognise that this identity is complicated and contested, and there is no single unitary meaning of what it means to be 'British Chinese' (Parker & Song, 2007). However, the users of these websites constitute a tiny percentage of young British Chinese and the average age of their participants is around thirty (Parker & Song, 2006). These two websites seem to have limited influence on school-aged British Chinese since almost all participants in Mau's (2013) study and the present study had never used them. Yeh (2000, 2014) focuses more specifically on how British Chinese young musicians and artists draw on local and global popular culture to contest and redefine the discursive 'British Chinese identity'.

#### **2.4.2 British Chinese as model minority in mainstream schools**

##### ***Academic attainment and aspirations of British Chinese pupils***

The data released by the Department for Education (DfE) in the last ten years demonstrate the consolidated patterns of British Chinese pupils' academic achievement at school. Figures 32, 33 and 34 (see Appendix) show UK pupils' achievements at GCSE and equivalent in the 2013–2014 academic year. Figure 32 shows that Chinese pupils out-perform other ethnic groups at GCSE level: 85.5% of Chinese pupils gain 5 or more GCSE A\*-C grades. Figure 34 shows that this attainment pattern of British Chinese pupils has remained fairly steady in the past ten years: they always lead the score and keep a twenty per cent or more above the national average achievement level.

This persistent pattern of British Chinese pupils also shows that the influence of social factors to educational attainment, such as gender and socio-economic status, is not as salient among British Chinese pupils as in the majority white British student population (Archer & Francis, 2007). In almost

all ethnic groups, girls outscore boys. However, boys in the British Chinese group (81.7%) achieve much higher results than the majority white British girls (71.0%) and girls overall (71.4%). Figure 33 shows that on average poorer children, defined as those qualifying for free school meals (FSMs), are less likely to achieve high scores than more affluent children in their exams. But the gaps tend to be far smaller in the Chinese ethnic group. The gap between the achievement of Chinese non-FSM pupils and FSM pupils is 2.6%, whereas the gap for white British is 34.2% and for all pupils is 28%. More surprisingly, British Chinese girls from poorer families (87.5%) do as well as, or even better than pupils from richer families on average (85.7%).

Ethnic Chinese pupils, as part of a diaspora, are frequently observed to be academically strong and hardworking in the USA (Sy & Schulenberg, 2005; Yang & Zhou, 2008), Western Europe (Pieke, 1991) and Canada (Costigan, Hua, & Su, 2010). A discourse of 'model minority' is used to acknowledge the educational and career success of minority ethnic groups. In the USA, this term was often associated with Asian Americans, especially those with ancestral backgrounds from China, Japan and Korea who are often stereotyped as intelligent, hard-working and compliant (Suzuki, 1977, 2002; Ngo & Lee, 2007). This discourse that perceives Chinese pupils as a model minority has also been observed in the British context (Archer & Francis, 2005b; Mau, 2013). Together with high academic achievements, British Chinese pupils and their parents are also found have high educational aspirations (Verma et al., 1999; Francis & Archer, 2005b). British Chinese young people have among the highest proportional rates of progression into higher education (Archer & Francis, 2007). However, critics warn of the hidden risk of this 'positive' stereotype as it downplays the heterogeneity within and between ethnic groups; and overlooks the psychological problems of the inflated expectations for academic achievement (Archer & Francis, 2005b; S. J. Lee, 2009; B. Wong, 2015).

### ***Behind the successful educational attainments***

In the field of studying educational achievement, two frameworks are frequently used to explain the various levels of education achievement. One is the social structural theory (Steinberg, 2001), which states that particular



social structural elements, such as gender, socioeconomic status, urban residence, immigrant status and parents' level of education, create barriers to, or increase opportunities for, individual achievement. The other framework is that of cultural explanations (Ogbu, 1982), which tie outcomes to cultural beliefs and values taught and learned within certain groups. Recently, many scholars have sought to combine both frameworks when discussing academic achievement (Pearce, 2006).

In the case of diasporic Chinese pupils, from the cultural explanation perspective, Chinese cultural tradition places a high value on education for self-improvement, self-esteem, and family honour. Chinese parenting emphasises obedience and a set standard of conduct, and the importance of parental control in instilling the need to work hard, gain self-discipline, and do well in school (Chao, 2001; Lau, 2014). From the social structural perspective, their aspirations are not seen to be a 'personal' choice, but as part of a familial project to navigate inequalities and achieve upward social mobility (Francis & Archer, 2005b).

Francis and Archer (2005b) attempt to understand British Chinese academic achievements from both the cultural and social structural perspectives by using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital as explaining tools. Section 3.4.2 discusses these concepts further. They find that British Chinese parents and pupils construct the discourse of 'valuing education' in specifically racialized cultural terms and it becomes 'a defining feature of their Chinese identity' (Archer & Francis, 2006, p. 40). Archer and Francis (2006) suggest understanding this discourse as part of the British Chinese collective habitus, which originates from their cultural heritage, migratory experiences and economic hardship; and shapes their current expectations and activities. The central narrative of this habitus is the expectation of realizing upward social mobility. They further demonstrate how British Chinese families utilize different forms of economic, cultural and social capital for their children to succeed in the British education system (Francis & Archer, 2005b).

Teachers in mainstream schools attribute British Chinese pupils' high achievements to a Chinese family culture that promotes obedience to

authority and hard work (Archer & Francis, 2005b). British Chinese girls were overwhelmingly presented as hardworking, high achieving, submissive and quiet. British Chinese boys were seen as diligent and well behaved in contrast to the 'laddishness' of the majority of boys from other ethnic backgrounds. In this way, both Chinese femininity and masculinity are associated with notions of passivity, quietness and conformity in school. Nevertheless, Archer and Francis (2005b) briefly highlight the more diverse performances that challenge such 'passive and conformist' stereotypes from their interviews with British Chinese pupils.

More recently, researchers (Bell, 2013a; Lau, 2014) have started to notice the conflicts and changing relationship between different generations in British Chinese families. They challenge the stereotypical views of British Chinese parenting as cultivating obedience and submissiveness. Meanwhile, several authors (Sham & Woodrow, 1998; Archer & Francis, 2005a; Mau, 2014) have also raised concerns about the possible difficulties faced by British Chinese pupils in school, such as issues of racial discrimination and integration within mainstream society.

Based on the literature reviewed above, this study believes that academic aspirations and performances is a central theme in exploring the cultural identities of school-aged British Chinese young people. Chapter 8 takes a further step to explore how British Chinese children interpret and draw on the discourses of 'valuing education' and the stereotype of 'model minority' to construct their distinctive cultural identities in mainstream schools. In addition, Chapter 8 also looks into issues concerning British Chinese pupils' experiences of social interactions with peers in mainstream schools.

#### **2.4.3 Language, culture and identities: British Chinese pupils in Chinese complementary schools**

As a sub-discipline within the field of foreign language education, community/heritage languages (CHLs) are used to describe those languages other than English that are associated with the cultural background of minority groups or communities, whether these are indigenous, immigrant, colonial, second, or foreign languages in any given context (Van Deusen-Scholl,

2003). In the UK, appropriate pedagogies for CHL learners are underdeveloped owing to their voluntary nature, the limited resources of community language schools, and inadequate scholarly and governmental attention to engage these learners. In addition, the CHL learners in these schools, as young adolescents, may go through a difficult process of maintaining their CHLs and constructing their cultural identities. It is important for these young people growing up in the UK to feel comfortable and proud of their linguistic and cultural background (J. Anderson, 2008). In this sense, existing studies have shown that Chinese complementary schools have a strong influence on the construction of the British Chinese identity of British Chinese pupils (Creese et al., 2006; W. Li & Zhu, 2010).

### ***Language as capital and identity***

The majority of British Chinese pupils, parents and Chinese teachers often list 'being Chinese' as the key reason for learning Chinese language (Archer & Francis, 2007; W. Li & Zhu, 2010; Francis et al., 2014). Fluency in Chinese is often constructed as a necessary practice of 'Chineseness' and a marker of cultural identification by Chinese in wider British society (Archer & Francis, 2005a). Such 'unquestionable' powerful discourses that equate language proficiency with ethnic duty and identity profoundly influence the experiences and identities of British Chinese pupils across social classes (Francis et al., 2014). Mau's (2013) study, on the other hand, focuses on the identities of those British Chinese young people with limited or no Chinese language knowledge. The participants in Mau's study believe that a range of other cultural practices apart from speaking Chinese, such as the celebration of Chinese festivals, consumption of Chinese or Asian popular culture and maintenance of customs, all constitute being 'Chinese' in Britain. Meanwhile, learning Chinese language is also thought of as social or cultural capital in a more instrumental way. It facilitates communication with relatives in China (mostly in Hong Kong in the study by Francis et al.) and helps with learning about Chinese culture. Gaining exam credentials such as GCSE and A-level Chinese is also thought to raise children's competitive edge in their future careers, wherever they are based (Francis et al., 2009).

It is noticed that the learning of Cantonese, the former lingua franca of the British Chinese community, is being usurped and gradually replaced by Mandarin education in the global Chinese diaspora (W. Li & Wu, 2009; Mau et al., 2009; W. Li & Zhu, 2010). From the accounts of respondents from both previous studies and this study, learning Mandarin has become an 'official' tie to one's Chinese heritage and an increasingly important asset for British Chinese young people's future careers. Cantonese, on the other hand, as the entry point to Hong Kong youth culture such as Canton-pop and animations used to be very important in the lives of many British Chinese young people (Parker, 1995; Bell, 2013b). But its significance in terms of transnational youth cultural consumption is very small among young people in new Chinese migrant families. As reported in Chapter 9, many young people from Cantonese speaking families were reported to switch classes to learn Mandarin. This shift reflects that language, as the marker of identities, is also subject to the economic and social changes of the immigrants' origin and the influence of the dominant discourses about China as a whole in wider British society. Furthermore, most studies about Chinese complementary schools in Britain are based in Cantonese-oriented Chinese schools, in which the vast majority of their respondents originated from Hong Kong. The present study aims to better reflect the changing pupil population and learning preferences in these schools by conducting the research in two Cantonese-oriented schools and two schools that only provide Mandarin education.

### ***British Chinese identities in Chinese complementary schools***

Apart from Chinese language acquisition, pupils in Chinese complementary schools particularly value the holistic teaching approach that integrates language learning with wider aspects of Chinese culture, history and philosophy (Francis et al., 2010). These schools are valuable for British Chinese pupils because they are believed to provide a 'safe space' away from racism (Zhou & Li, 2003; Creese, et al., 2006) and offer a learning space within which like-minded, 'love-learning' Chinese pupils can escape from disruptive and uninterested peers in mainstream schools (Archer et al., 2009). On the other hand, researchers also observed British Chinese pupils' disengaged and disruptive behaviour in the classrooms of Chinese complementary schools, contrary to the overwhelming perception of British

Chinese as a 'model minority' (Archer et al., 2009). Chapter 9 also demonstrates that Chinese complementary school is not a place that is free from racism and segregation, nor an ideal learning space with the most well-behaved and diligent pupils.

Apart from learners' identities, Chinese complementary schools are also seen as important sites in which the meanings of 'Chineseness' and identities are constantly negotiated and contested. Since Chinese culture is often taught in the form of values, customs, art and crafts and as cultural practice in these schools, some teachers have been criticized for having 'old-fashioned' and ineffective teaching methods, with an 'essentialized' view of Chinese culture (viewing culture as a fixed and static entity) (Francis et al., 2010, p. 115). More importantly, these cultural representations and practices of collective 'Chineseness' also became a form of relational 'othering' among ethnic groups (Archer, et al., 2010). Pupils in these schools were reported as more likely to draw on contemporary youth culture than the formal cultural agenda of schools in the construction of their cultural identities. Chapter 9 takes a closer look at the planning and execution of cultural activities to teach Chinese culture in Chinese schools. From pupils' opinions of different types of activities, this study investigates the ways in which British Chinese pupils construct their identities in Chinese community language classrooms.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Outlining the waves of Chinese migration and patterns of Chinese settlement in Britain, this chapter has highlighted the new features and the increasing heterogeneity within British Chinese communities. The reference point of the family catering trade, which used to be the key factor shaping the experiences and identities of British Chinese young people, is no longer applicable for many new Chinese migrant families. Engaging with a diverse group of British Chinese young people, this study hopes to reflect the demographic changes, and the rising economic and political impact of China on the British Chinese community in recent years. Having acknowledged the complex ethnic and cultural background of each participant, this study loosely applies the term 'British Chinese' to young people of Chinese descent. The discursive

construction of the multiple meanings of 'British Chinese' is one of the main aims of this study.

More specifically, this study focuses on British Chinese pupils aged 13 to 18 who are often seen as high achieving and successful in British schools. As the emphasis on education has almost become a defining feature of British Chinese identities, this study further investigates the formation, adaptation and impact of different discourses concerning British Chinese pupils in mainstream English schools. While the role of learning Chinese language has been discussed extensively in the formation of British Chinese identities, this study investigates the practice of teaching Chinese culture through cultural activities and the social function of British Chinese complementary schools for Chinese young people in Britain. Furthermore, this study also fills the gap in the literature by exploring the fast-changing relationship between the use of media and young British Chinese.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Cultural Identity**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The concepts of 'culture', 'identity', and their combination of 'cultural identity' have been widely used but heavily contested in many intellectual and academic disciplines. The theoretical conceptualizations of 'cultural identity' are particularly difficult as the two terms incorporate a wide range of possible meanings and concepts. For this reason, I will first review some relevant approaches in dealing with these two concepts respectively, and then establish the theoretical framework of investigating cultural identity for this study. The specific terms and debates discussed in this chapter are closely linked to research questions and grounded in the analysis of this study.

#### **3.2 Identity: from sameness to difference**

Although traditionally dominated by psychologists, the concept of identity has been examined by a range of scholars in diverse disciplines such as anthropology, cultural studies, sociology, and many others. Given such a wide range of approaches in understanding the concept of identity, there has been a similar 'discursive turn' in almost all approaches within identity studies in the latter half of the twentieth century. There has been a shift within identity studies from examining what identity is to how identity is discursively constructed (Wetherell, 2010). The concept of 'identity' has moved away from the notion of a fixed 'stable and core sense of self' (Jackson, 1999), to a more postmodern discourse: identity is shifting, fluid, mobile, unstable and constantly in a state of becoming (Hall, 1990).

##### **3.2.1 Developing conceptions of identity**

The etymology of identity is derived from the Latin *identitat* and/or *identidem*, a contraction of *idem et idem*, meaning 'repeatedly', or literally 'same and same' (Sökefeld, 1999). This implication of a stable, fixed, repetitive 'sameness' was carried forward into early research dedicated to identity. Thus, sameness and continuity became the key features of the early construct of identity.

Eric Erikson, the most prominent identity theorist of the 1960s, used the concept of 'identity' to describe an individual's conscious sense of a coherent self that is the same as how she/he is identified by others (Frosh, 2010). Instead of looking inwards for the essential core of identity, the Social Identity Approach (SIA) in the 1970s conceptualized identities as individual reflections of fixed and essentialized social categories and structures such as place of birth, biological characteristics, and social class, among others (Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010).

While social psychologists focus their attention on social categories, anthropologists like Goodenough (1970) argue that individual identities are rooted primarily in the predictable cultural patterns grounded in the stability of the community. Therefore, understandings of identity in anthropology have been closely linked to the meaning of 'culture'. Before the 1960s, 'culture' often referred principally to a fixed entity that binds a group of people together in a coherent way (Gilroy, 1997). With the connotations of sameness and stability, identity in this tradition came to be understood mainly as the 'self-image' of the culture of a group (van Meijl, 2010, p. 66). As a means to speak about social and political solidarity, identity from this perspective is no longer an affirmation of subjectivity and autonomy, but a set of chosen traits that set one group apart from others. Rather than acting, negotiating and making choices, individuals are seen as obedient, silent and fixed in their identities.

Early psychological and anthropological identity studies were preoccupied with 'sameness', and from this point of view, 'otherness' can only be a threat to maintaining the 'uniqueness' of one group. This essentialist view sees identity as being derived from fixed and primordial qualities of either individual or social character, such as biological or cultural inheritance, kinship and homeland. As globalization transforms, theoretical developments across the social sciences and humanities challenged and questioned these assumptions and led to the discursive turn in identity research. The following section reviews discursive conceptualization of identity in anthropology and cultural studies.



### 3.2.2 The discursive turn

'Time-space compression', 'increasing interconnectedness' and 'deterritorialization' have been seen as the most significant features of globalization (Appadurai, 1996; Giddens, 1996; Held & McGrew, 2003). The social space can no longer be wholly mapped in terms of geographic territorial locations and distinctions between cultures; and identities can no longer be easily defined by nationalities or birthplace. Large-scale migration crossing political boundaries produces identities that are shaped by, and located in, various places. Concepts such as 'diaspora' and 'transnationalism' (see discussions in Chapter 4) provide alternative frameworks for understanding identities that are not located in the one and only 'homeland'. The growth of different kinds of diaspora has challenged the assumed harmony between people and their communities of birth. The ecology of cultural identity has been taken "far beyond the earlier dualism of genealogy and geography" (Gilroy, 1997, p. 332). Meanwhile, the globalization process together with its associated flows of transnational migration provoked the rise of multicultural societies. In post-colonial Europe and the United States, migrants and native citizens have responded to the cultural diversity within one community with a renewed search for identity.

But this does not mean national or ethnic identity has disappeared, as it is still present in social discourses. As locality is no longer sufficient for providing the sole anchor and marker for identities, there is still desire for the restoration of the unity of an 'imagined community'. This is the term used by Benedict Anderson (1991) to describe national identity as something imagined by the members of the nation, offering some compass point in the changing and uncertain era of globalization. His explanation of national identity as subjective imagination sees identities as being imagined and constructed in discourse.

Apart from the imagined national identities, every social context or cultural field has its own norms and over time, develops its own 'imaginary'. Controlled discourses about gender roles, race and sexuality denied some marginalized groups accessing to their own imaginary identities. However, since the 1960s, a series of 'new social movements' emerged in the UK and

the United States, which involved struggles over identity for marginalized groups, such as 'women's liberation' or feminism, the black civil rights movement in the United States, and gay and lesbian politics becoming public issues in opposition to discriminatory legislation. Identity in 'Identity Politics' became a major factor in political mobilization for the oppressed and marginalized (Woodward, 1997, p. 24). These new social movements have challenged the fixity of identity that lies in the 'truth of tradition and roots of history' (Hall, 1990, p. 28). They claim a concept of identity that is not *in spite* of difference, but *because of* it. Thus, Identity Politics link questions of identity with the issue of social status and power. Ironically, Identity Politics has been criticized as another kind of strategic essentialism necessary for particular political purposes, which also runs the risk of fixing identity and ignoring diversity (Buckingham, 2008).

### **3.2.3 Discursive identities**

The old framework that tried to capture sameness as the essence of identity is no longer suitable for explaining the complexity of identity. Identity theorists who lead the 'discursive turn' see identity not as a fixed 'being', but as a never-ending or unfinished 'becoming', as changing discursive positioning. In this context, Stuart Hall's definition of identity is often cited:

(Identity refers to) the meeting point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us a subjects which can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us.

(Hall, 1996a, pp. 3, 4)

Stuart Hall's definition opened several directions for identity studies. The first direction is to position 'difference' at the centre of identity formation. Uniqueness or sameness is no longer the defining feature of identity. Instead, it is not until the difference from others has been recognised that the

sameness and uniqueness of the identity come to the surface (Hall, 1991b). Since identity was constructed by difference, the extreme form of differences—binary opposition—was often central to the production of meaning as well as to the categorization of the classical version of identity, such as ‘native and foreign’, ‘men and women’, ‘us and them.’ Built on such clear-cut oppositions, identity had never seemed so straightforward and complete. However, as mentioned above, contemporary Identity Politics destabilized unitary categories such as ‘black’, ‘women’, and ‘sexuality’. Theorists have started to examine how these oppositions are imposed by those in power as the logic of social discourses and also a process of exclusion. The close scrutiny of ‘difference’ moves beyond opposition and opens up large-scale exploration of ‘in-between’ and ‘hybrid’ identities in terms of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and religion. Diasporic young people, as the main participants of this study, are some of the best representatives of hybrid identities with their frontier experiences of the conjuncture of cultural values and changing cultural dynamics.

Since identity is marked out by difference, the more important question to ask is how that difference is marked. Avtar Brah has aptly explained:

We are formed as subjects—American, European, South Asian, East Asian, Muslim, Christian, black, white, man, woman, hetero/gay/lesbian/trans/bisexual, and so on—in and through historically specific dynamics of power in particular contexts. [...] what is important is the way in which under given historical circumstances an arbitrary signifier—a colour, a body, a religious creed, a social arrangement/custom, or a set of cultural practices—come to be associated with particular meanings; that is, it becomes a “certain kind of difference” etched within asymmetrical power relations with specific outcomes and effects.

(Brah, 2007, pp. 137-138)

Following this direction, the focus of identity studies has shifted from describing what one’s identity is towards investigating how the ‘signifier’

associated with certain sets of meanings is signified; how the differences between people are manifested and represented; and the role these marked differences have played in the construction of identities. Thus, identity is closely connected with social structure and its corresponding symbolic system and discourse. In this vein, this study investigates how the category of 'Chinese' operates in practice in different cultural, political and geographical contexts. Thus the key research questions examine how the meanings of 'Chineseness' is defined and negotiated in the media (see Chapters 6 and 7), and in schools (see Chapters 8 and 9). More importantly, it explores how these young people themselves identify and make sense of the meanings of 'Chineseness' in these different social settings.

Subjects can be 'spoken' of by their difference in real, social lives and in a symbolic realm. Therefore, Hall suggests that instead of trying to portray the 'real' image of identity, identity studies should focus on the moments of identifications. In Hall's theory, 'identification' is seen as a meeting point that is 'multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses practices and positions' (Hall, 1996a, p. 4). Each of the identifications is temporary and a more or less arbitrary moment of closure. Rather than being characterized by a singular and stable identity, people constantly and simultaneously identify themselves with different discourses and practices. The process of identification produces the subjectivity and agency of each individual. Identity, on the other hand, has become a space or nexus where these multiple identifications coincide and sometimes also collide. Therefore, identity becomes a 'floating signifier,' a never-ending process, always accomplished and then undone, always incomplete, unfinished and only part of the story. Thus the research focus of identity studies should rest upon 'the multiplicity of identity possibilities in any particular situation or context' (Wetherell, 2010, p. 15).

Hall's concept of 'identity' emphasises the existence of subjectivity. Subjects identify themselves with discourses or meanings that can accommodate their chosen positions. In his words, subjects are first 'interpellated,' a term derived from Althusser (1971) to explain the ways in which subjects are recruited into subject positions through recognising themselves (Woodward, 1997). More

importantly, subjects actively invest in and articulate their own positions. Identity is not naturally given; rather, individuals have the right to construct and take responsibility for their own identities. A similar approach can be found in the work of Judith Butler (1990, 1993). She argues that the biological terms of sex and gender are constructed and regulated by the compulsive discourses of heterosexuality and reproduced by reiterated performances. Her later work (2004) explores the cases where the seemingly inevitable gender norms might be disrupted and undone through performativity. The arguments of Butler and her followers acknowledge that all identities are constructed and subject to changes over time. Her argument is inspirational in identity studies related to race and ethnicity. While acknowledging biological racial and ethnic differences, the real question is to what extent a body or one's identity is defined by these differences. Meanwhile, there are possibilities for more flexible, varied ways in which identities can be expressed and performed. After the foregoing brief discussion of some issues relating to identity, the following section discusses the concept of 'culture' within the term cultural identity.

### **3.3 The concept of 'culture' in cultural identity**

Like the concept of 'identity', the concept of 'culture' has been used and explored for different purposes across a range of social sciences and in the humanities. The meanings of the concept of 'culture', however, often remain vague and ambivalent. Around the same time, the concepts of 'identity' and 'culture' have both experienced a theoretical crisis, where their 'original' meanings were deconstructed and their applications were called into question and even deserted. Nevertheless, the reinvigorated understandings of these two concepts are closely connected and their mutual relationship defines the key concept of this thesis: 'cultural identity'.

#### **3.3.1 The historical use of 'culture'**

Summarized first by Kuper (2000) then by T. Bennett and Frow (2008), three main traditions emerge in the historical use of culture in the humanities and social sciences. The first comes from the French or Universalist tradition formed in the second half of the eighteenth century. In this tradition, 'culture' was used in the same sense as 'civilization', which is to say it was

represented as a universal, progressive and distinctive achievement against barbarism and savages. Drawing on ideas from social evolutionism, the differences in culture are interpreted as hierarchical evolutionary rankings within natural constraints such as race, geographical locality and biological traits (T. Bennett & Frow, 2008). This perspective provided sources for the argument of 'cultural homogenization' as the cultural consequence of globalization (Ferguson, 1992). This argument sees 'local' culture as a barrier to modernization or globalization, and modern civilization would eventually trample over the local and less efficient traditions (Kuper, 2000).

Originating from the German tradition in the eighteenth century, the second tradition emphasises the equal and relative relations of different cultures. 'Cultures' were defined as territorially bounded networks of customs, traditions, and ways of doing and making (Kuper, 2000) or contesting 'civilizations' (Huntington, 1993). The logic embedded in this tradition has been carried through in the argument of 'cultural heterogenization' and multiculturalism as the cultural consequence of globalization (Ferguson, 1992). But this tradition sees different cultures as independent, complete and distinctive entities, suggesting a kind of stability and homogeneity within each culture. It is argued that culture, the commonly shared customs and traditions, shape the social order of a community and the way people think and act: in other words, their identities. Therefore, cultural identity is thought to be the result of the internalization of culture, while culture is realized through the projection of collective identity.

The third tradition is called the 'structural tradition,' and stems from social theories expounded in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The classic representative of this tradition is Marx's famous base-superstructure metaphor. It argues that the basis of society is an economic substructure or foundation, upon which the social infrastructure and the ideological superstructures are built. Here, 'culture' is used interchangeably with the term 'ideology' as functions in a system of values and beliefs (T. Bennett & Frow, 2008). Economic production and exchange largely determine the relationships of social classes and their competing ideologies. Ideologies, on the other hand, have only limited influence on social activities and economic

production. 'Culture' becomes a resource that is to be managed in order to realize particular economic and social goals (Yudice, 2003). Culture is here conceived as a reflective system of economic status and an internalized model of social order. 'Identity' in this model, is determined by an individual's economic and social status and shaped and regulated by the contradictory social forces in the cultural sphere.

The development of the concept of culture implicitly suggests that culture is thought as a strong and internalized constraint on people's actions, even though there may be different explanations of where this power comes from and how it works. However, in the 1960s, a group of anthropologists started to seriously contest this problematic concept and later proposed to discard the term 'culture' altogether as it had come to be understood within their field.

### **3.3.2 Writing against culture**

Starting from deconstructionist and poststructuralist theory, a group of researchers proposed a diversity of perspectives to 'write against' the concept of 'culture' (Kahn, 1989; Rosaldo, 1989; Abu-Lughod, 1991). The main critiques of the concept of culture are in terms of the following three aspects.

The first critique is to see each culture only existing within its own isolated and divided territorial space and forming a closed system (Brightman, 1995). This conception of culture implies an "Us and Them" dichotomy, underpinning the conceptual framework whereby researchers overemphasise differences between cultures. This conception of culture also leads to another assumption that culture is rooted in a stable locality or potentially fertile soil, as seen in the word 'culture,' as an agricultural metaphor. Owing to the increase in global interdependence, trade and migration, this idea of culture has increasingly become less adequate for studying current social activities.

The second critique of culture is its assumption of homogeneity within each culture, which becomes one of the 'most problematic connotations of culture' (Abu-Lughod, 1991, p. 154). This conception of culture brings with it the idea that certain characteristics, ways of thinking and being are intrinsic to a people and place over time, despite outward changes in people's lives

(Keesing, 1990). But to represent a culture by summarizing the shared patterns of society is to be open to a charge of essentialism. This notion of homogeneous culture largely neglects the power of individual agents and the diversity of practices and discourses they exhibit. Furthermore, power relations and hegemonic agencies have not been fully represented in this construct of 'culture'. The flourishing studies of youth subcultures such as hippies, skinheads, punks and urban tribes show them to be resisting or opposing the imperatives of parental culture through fashion, dance, music and other cultural forms (Buckingham, 2008).

The third critique claims that the concept of culture is ahistorical, which 'emphasises shared patterns, at the expense of processes of change' (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 28). This conception not only represents cultures as lacking an internal historical dynamic, but also as excluding intercultural contacts and cultural changes. Culture is seen as a self-reproducing, autonomous and primordial system that regulates the minds and behaviours of those who live within it. These critiques demonstrate the need for a reinvigorated concept of culture.

### **3.3.3 The 'cultural turn'**

By the 1970s in the UK, the movement in social sciences to make culture the focus of contemporary debates in different disciplines was described as the 'cultural turn' (Hunt, 1989; Brumann, 1999; Marcus, 2001). Authors like Raymond Williams insisted that 'culture is ordinary', which meant that ways of living and also the forms of signification circulating through media such as television, novels and advertisements (Williams, 1961, 1989) should share equal attention. Led by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies based in Birmingham University, cultural studies as framed by Stuart Hall and his colleagues acted as a model for others around the world. This cultural turn challenged the holistic notions of culture that informed earlier research and thinking and shifted focus to the analysis of other dimensions of popular culture, such as comic strips, soap operas and advertisements which had not previously been accorded the critical recognition they deserved.



The symbolic dimensions of culture were also emphasised by cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who saw culture as “composed of seriously contested codes and representations” (Geertz & Marcus, 1986, p. 2). Building on Gilbert Ryle’s notion of ‘thick description’ and George Herbert Mead’s work on symbolic interaction, Geertz argues that culture does not consist of underlying rules abstractly locked inside people’s heads, but is embedded in socio-cultural relationships and embodied in public symbolic forms. He explained how symbolic forms should be considered as vehicles for cultural meanings. He proposes that ethnographers who study culture must present a “thick description” composed not only of facts but also of interpretations of symbols, behaviours and hierarchies of cultural categories (Geertz, 1973). This perspective on culture runs parallel to the discursive turn in identity research mentioned in Section 3.2.2. Both approaches moved away from a focus on the function and structure of ‘identity’ and ‘culture,’ or the question of ‘what is identity/culture’ to empirical questions regarding the embodiment of culture/identity, or how culture/identity is represented.

Many researchers such as Appadurai and Breckenridge (1989) and Sahlins (1999) propose to abandon the territorially-bounded, homogenized and ahistorical study of culture. They urge researchers to recognise the hybrid nature of all cultures, especially in the overlapping borderland, where cultures should be seen as zones of motion, process, and creativity. This is especially true in the contemporary globalized world with increasing interactions and connections between places, people and cultures. Cultural homogenization or heterogenization are not able to represent accelerated globalization and cultural mixing. Thus, concepts such as cultural hybridity and interculturality have been proposed to describe the deterritorialization of culture in a globalized world.

#### **3.3.4 Cultural hybridity**

For Pieterse (2004), hybridity is constituted by people’s experiences of hybrid spaces (created by international organisations, migration and global media), hybrid hyper-space (facilitated by information technology), mixed times (the coexistence of pre-modernity, modernity and postmodernity in the same place), and multiple identities (an individual can choose from a plurality of

ethnic organisations). Hall locates the concept of hybridity in the experiences of diasporas. He calls for the interrogation of the 'the innocent notion of an essentialist Black subject' (Hall, 1996b, p. 443) or the notion of 'other' and suggests that the way forward is to recognise the immense diversity and hybridity of the historical and cultural experiences of diasporas.

On the other hand, the ahistorical, decontextualised application of 'hybridity' have been highlighted by several critics. Jonathan Friedman (1999) argues that the notion of 'hybridity' is redundant because all cultures are never pure but hybrids. Thus the claim of hybridity as a blending of cultures in fact, contrary to the intention of most hybridity theorists, reproduces the bounded notions of culture. He also points out that the difference between identifications, in many cases, lies in social positions, often a question of class struggle rather than a difference in cultural insight (Friedman, 1997). Ang (2001) also warns that the notion of hybridity should not be used as if the mixture of cultures is a harmonious fusion. To be theoretically useful, the notion of hybridity requires an accurate contextualisation. It is important to recognise that different cultures do not have equal status in reality, and the intermingling of culture is also subject to power discourses and cultural hegemony (Toninato, 2014).

Most of Friedman's critique is based on the understanding of hybridity as a free mixing of cultures. However, hybridity is not a simple cut-and-paste of two 'original' cultures because all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994). Hybridity is the 'third place' that enables new positions, new structures of authority, new agendas, and consequently new discourses to emerge (Rutherford, 1990). The conception of hybridity as displacement is not the replacement of previous cultural categories with new ones, rather, it questions the ways in which the cultural boundaries are drawn (Frello, 2015). In this way, the claim to be British Chinese does not imply one can freely draw from 'the best of both cultures', as many participants had hoped and self-identified in this study (see discussions in Chapter 8). Rather, the understanding of hybrid identities is closely tied to the deconstruction of specific categories such as British, Chinese and even the British Chinese. Indeed, the hybrid tag of 'British Chinese' may also become a process of

‘othering’ or ‘exoticization’ through stereotypes in public discourse (see Section 8.2). The discussion of hybridity is useful in addressing the second research theme of this study: how, and under what circumstances, these young people may be able to construct their hybrid identities for their own benefit by comfortably asserting ‘differences’ or ‘sameness’ to a particular group.

### **3.3.5 Interculturality**

In earlier discussion of ‘cultural identity’, identity is often discussed in terms of the fixed and often exaggerated ‘cultural differences’, later criticized as ‘culturalism’ (Bayart, 2005). In this study, this perspective is very much present in the narratives within which British Chinese parents define themselves and their children: for example, helping out in a family catering business is seen as being ‘good’ and more Chinese (see discussion in Section 2.4.1), achieving high scores and behaving well in school is seen as an intrinsic quality of being Chinese (see Chapter 8); and the learning of Chinese language and culture is essential for cultural identities (see Chapter 9). More recently, in the field of intercultural communication and education, interculturality, as an emerging research paradigm, represents a line of investigation that problematizes ‘solid’ and fixed conceptions of cultural identity and emphasises the ‘inter’ nature of interactions (Zhu, 2015). This approach takes a ‘fluid’ and discursive conception of cultural identity by not only focusing on ‘cultural’ differences but also expanding to other structural factors such as gender, occupation, social class; and the way identity is created through the interaction of two (or more) individuals (Dervin, 2013). Researchers following this line of approach (Machart, Lim, Lim, & Yamato, 2013; Dervin & Risager, 2015; Zhu, 2015) argue that an individual may simultaneously hold multiple, overlapping and sometimes contradictory identifications, and not all identifications are equally relevant or salient in a specific context. Cultural identity, as a process, is constructed and negotiated through interaction, empowered and limited by the positions of a subject within a given time and place.

In a series of papers, Zhu (2008, 2010, 2015) applies the approach of interculturality to an analysis of intergenerational talk within Chinese diasporic

families in Britain. Focusing on participants' code-switching, address terms and their discussions about the appropriateness of social, cultural and linguistic behaviours, Zhu views intergenerational talk as a process of interculturality. She argues that the younger generations of diasporic communities not only internalize the social, cultural and linguistic norms of their community, but also play an active role in constructing and creating their own social and cultural identities as well as bringing about changes to the existing community and family norms. In a similar vein, the current study applies the concept of interculturality in exploring the representations provided by British Chinese pupils of their cultural identities (see Chapter 6) and the learning of Chinese culture through participating in cultural activities in Chinese complementary schools (see Chapter 9).

From the above review of the concepts of culture and identity, we can see that they have both been used as fixed, powerful and omnipresent analytical tools in social science research; criticized for being rigid, essentialized and ahistorical; and rejected by deconstructivist critics. Yet the concepts of culture and identity have undoubtedly exerted an influence in academic, political, and mass media discourses. These are two concepts that 'cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all' (Hall, 1996a, p. 2). Therefore, what we need is not an abandonment or abolition of these concepts, but a reconceptualization—thinking in its new, discursive, strategic and unbounded way within the paradigm. In other words, when we think and use both concepts, we need to decentre them from theories 'of the knowing subject' to theories 'of discursive practices.' From here we could build a theoretical framework for the analysis of 'cultural identity'.

### **3.4. Cultural Identities: Stuart Hall and Pierre Bourdieu**

While Hall provides innovative theories in thinking about identities in the global era, Bourdieu presents a model with explanatory power to understand identities through people's everyday social practice. While Hall stresses the struggle of competing forces in the cultural sphere, by focusing on media, representation and discourses, Bourdieu emphasises the positions of power a person has within a field by examining what constitutes their 'capital' and how

this 'capital' is distributed in the field. This section attempts to construct a theoretical and analytic model to tackle the complicated construct of the 'cultural identity' of diasporic young people by comparing and combining the theories of both scholars.

### **3.4.1 Stuart Hall: cultural identities through representations**

For Hall, there is no understanding of identity outside of culture and representation (Hall, 1990). Hall presents his conception of cultural identity as a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being' (Hall, 1990, p. 225). For migrants, there are no ultimate 'roots' to return to in order to uncover their singular and true cultural identity. Their cultural identities are reconstructed by their experiences, or their 'different routes', which can lead to their current ways of living and to the futures they come to occupy. Therefore,

Cultural identity is not an essence but a **positioning** . . . [they] are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture.

(Hall, 1990, p. 226)

But how, exactly do we examine cultural identities? In Hall's theory, cultural identity needs to be understood through representations and discourses because 'identities are... constituted within, not outside representation' (Hall, 1996a, p. 4), or in other words, identities are constituted within discourses. He utilized an analytical framework for cultural identity: 'the circuit of culture' (du Gay, Hall, et al., 1997, p. 3). For Hall, the starting point from which to analyse cultural identity is to look at 'meaning'. In the circuit of culture, culture is mainly concerned with the production and exchange of shared meanings. These meanings provide people with their senses of identity. It is through making sense of these meanings that people define who they are and to whom they 'belong' (Hall, 1997a). All these meanings are constantly produced, circulated and consumed in systems of representation through language (or in a broader sense, signifying practice).

In order to understand meanings through signifying practice, people must share the same interpretative framework (decoding). Communication is possible because the shared code and source of meaning lies in society and culture. Meanwhile, in order to communicate, people give things meanings by representing them (encoding). Hall draws on the semiotic approach of Saussure along with Foucault's discursive approach to explain how systems of representation work. The semiotic approach argues that these meanings are subject to changes within history and culture (Hall, 1980). The discursive approach is not as concerned with interpretations of content, but with the production of knowledge through discourse, highlighting the 'underlying rules and codes through which such objects or practices produced meaning' (Hall, 1997b, p. 22). Not only do discourses govern the way a subject is talked about, they also influence and regulate practice. Discourses are produced by power relations that permeate every aspect of social units in specific historical contexts (Foucault, 1980). Hall suggests understanding cultural identity by investigating what meaning has been interpreted and represented, and how it is positioned in the regime of representations, or in Foucault's terms, the regime of power.

When examining cultural identity in the regime of discourses, the focus is on how 'difference' is articulated within discourses and then 'interpellated' into cultural identities. With the discursive understanding of culture as hybrid, changing and unbounded, Hall suggests that the meaning of representations or discourses, while being constructed through differences, is not always as fixed and rigid as the 'us/them' binary opposition. He explains this with Jacques Derrida's '*differance*' (Derrida, 1982), where meaning is always deferred, never quite fixed or complete. This way of understanding representations serves his conception of cultural identity that is always in the making and never complete.

But how, in this case, do we examine cultural identity in this 'infinite postponement of meaning' in discourse? Hall suggests looking at different 'stops' in the flux of identities – 'strategic and temporary identifications'. In this way, cultural identity was defined by the diaspora experiences and also by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity, or hybridity. Thus,

diasporic cultural identities are 'constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference' (Hall, 1990, p. 236). These transformations and differences are transmitted through representations and discourses and constitute diasporic cultural identities. Therefore, at a time of globalization where cultural identity is considered as subject to the postmodern conditions of plurality, fragmentation and difference, the only option is to address cultural identity in all its varying representations in contemporary practices (van Meijl, 2010). Following this vein, this study investigates how British Chinese young people interpret the meanings of 'China and the Chinese' that are constructed by various discourses in British media, in diasporic Chinese families, in mainstream and Chinese complementary schools. It aims to provide a comprehensive picture of cultural identities of young British Chinese through these varying interpretations and active representations of their own lived experiences.

Hall's work provokes us to rethink the concept of cultural identity discursively 'without an arbitrary closure' (Hall, 1987, p. 45) within a multicultural context. However, Hall's proposition is not free of scholarly criticism. Ferguson and Golding (1997) point out that focusing discursively on cultural identity obscures consideration of the material and social determinants of culture. The discursive conception of cultural identity carries the connotation that cultural identities are not given by biology or by bounded territory but constituted through discourse. Hidden behind Hall's structuralist-inspired move is the classic question for structuralism: if discourses stand as a power over us, where do these discourses or structures come from and who creates them? In Hall's theory, discourse is not only the passive gift of history but also the product of individuals' interactions and experiences with history, not just the 'roots' but also the 'routes'. But Hall does not specify how these regimes of representations inform people's everyday activities. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, in this respect, provides a useful framework for understanding everyday manifestations under the influence of the discursive factors of constructed discourses and the non-discursive factors of class formation and the logic of capital.

### **3.4.2 Pierre Bourdieu: cultural identities in practice**

Bourdieu does not give a clear conception of 'culture', nor does he use the concept of 'identity' per se. Yet, he has become one of 'the most influential cultural theorist[s] in the world today' (Edles, 2002, p. 224), and his theories have been extensively used in studies of identities (Bottero, 2010; Farrell, 2010; Smith, 2012). Bourdieu aims to provide a set of 'thinking tools,' which 'take[s] shape for and by empirical work' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989, p. 50). In this section, four of Bourdieu's most important 'thinking tools'—the concepts of habitus, practice, capital and field—will be discussed with regards to investigating the cultural identities of diasporic young people.

Bourdieu's theory of practice seeks to transcend the dualism of objectivism and subjectivism, individual and structure. On the one hand, he intends to prove that real-life actors are not obedient to external norms and rules as portrayed by traditional structuralists. On the other hand, he does not want to fall into the trap of rational actor theory that perceives conscious and deliberate intentions as a sole explanation for people's behaviours (Jenkins, 2002). He has defined the notion of 'habitus' as follows:

(Habitus is) to signify a set of generative structures defined in phenomenological, social and psychological terms. Such structures must be understood as fluid, or dynamic, constantly changing and developing, but durable and stable in establishing dispositional knowledge: a tendency with limits towards certain responses when faced with external stimuli.

(Bourdieu, 1993, p. 80)

The definitions above show that habitus as dispositions and generative schemes become embedded in human beings, but conditioned by the social structure in which one lives, in Bourdieu's words, 'socialized subjectivity'. Rather than arguing that the individual and society are opposed, Bourdieu argues that social reality exists outside of individuals, but it is also internalized through subjective experiences and practice. Habitus is largely fixed early in life (family upbringing) and conditioned by subsequent experiences (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Habitus is a 'structured structure,' in the sense that habitus



operates below the level of consciousness and reflexivity, and generates perceptions and practices that correspond to the social structure in early socializations. It is also a 'structuring structure' as one's action and perceptions, informed by habitus, tend to reinforce the social structure. Thereby habitus reproduces the existing structures that socialize habitus (Hancock & Garner, 2009).

In Bourdieu's theory, habitus consists of unconscious and individualized dispositions developed from interaction with others in a specific field. On the other hand, people who share similar social contexts share a similar body of dispositions, classificatory categories and generative schemes. How, then, does habitus produce practice? Bourdieu uses the metaphor of social life as a game. As every game has rules, the rules for social life in Bourdieu's theory were created by the collective history of people's actions in specific objective environments (probabilities of the objective world). People learn the rules of the game through explicit teaching and experiences in practice. In the process, people unconsciously incorporate a set of practical expectations of what to do in specific contexts, or in Bourdieu's words, people act subconsciously according to habitus, 'the feel for the game', or the 'subjective expectation of objective probability' (Bourdieu, 1992). These subjective dispositions of habitus are durable and stable. As a consequence, social structures are reproduced and perpetuated throughout history. Meanwhile, Bourdieu also emphasises that habitus, as subjective generative schemes, is fluid and constantly developing. Thus the concept of habitus offers a gateway to understand the process of reproduction and transformation of certain cultural values across generations in a diaspora.

The seemingly contradictory qualities of habitus need to be understood in relation to the concept of 'field'. A field, in Bourdieu's sense, is a social arena with its own internally defined logic of practice, or a structured system of social positions with domination and subordination. The relational positions of individuals or institutions in the field are determined by the access to resources (capital) at stake in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989). These capitals can be differentiated into four categories: economic capital (all income, savings and assets that have a monetary value); cultural capital

(primarily credential knowledge of objects, practices or customs); social capital (various networks and valued relations that can help agents to achieve certain goals); and symbolic capital (power and honour given by social authorities) (Bourdieu, 1986). A field is a social space of struggle in which agents are constantly strategizing in order to preserve or improve their positions in the field with respect to the defining capitals (Jenkins, 2002). Thus, one's practice or actions in a particular field are the interactive consequences of dispositional habitus and the constraints of one's social positions within the dynamics of capitals in that field (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Since people belong to different groups or social fields, such as through their age group, gender, ethnicity and occupation, the shared habitus can produce different practices depending on the changing circumstances in the field. When the habitus aligns with specific fields, reflexive changes for the habitus are minimal. But habitus is also subject to conscious changes through agents' self-reflective awareness and efforts (Bourdieu, 2002).

In empirical research in education, the concept of habitus and capital has been applied to make sense of identities in relation to race and ethnicity. Connolly (2011) used large-scale survey data to demonstrate how preschool children already begin to embody and internalize the cultural habits and dispositions of their respective ethnic groups. Race, ethnicity, gender, class and such ascribed attributes are found to be constitutive of habitus, and through habitus and practice, these attributes are represented and transformed (Horvat & Antonio, 1999; Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Reay, 2004).

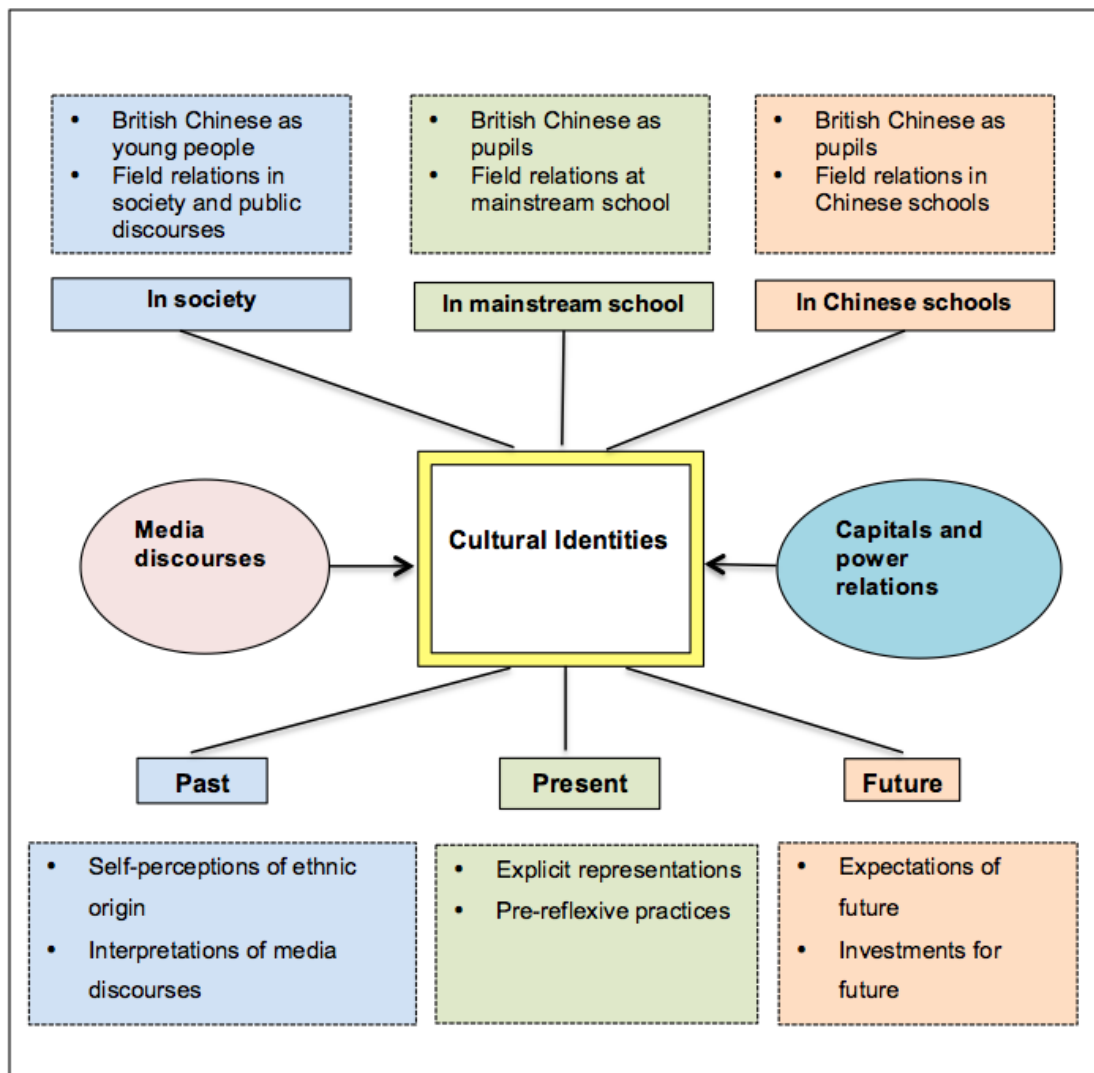
Hall's concept of 'cultural identity' and Bourdieu's 'habitus' have both been criticized for constructing a weak conception of agency or a 'fragile subjectivity' (Gilroy, 1997, p. 301). However, the conceptual and real-life importance of cultural identity and the analytical potential of habitus are not necessarily denuded by the charge of exaggerating structural determinism. Both authors maintain that cultural identity and habitus are open, to some degree, to changes in the face of new environments and experiences. After all, these concepts are 'thinking tools' that can be used in non-deterministic

ways seek to reflect and explain the dialectical relations between structure and agency in real life.

Following this route, this study explores the different ways in which British Chinese young people are positioned by, and position themselves within the intersections of different discourses (Chapters 6 and 8). It asks questions about whether the Chinese cultural heritage and migration history constitute important aspects of their habitus, which generates some of their shared tastes, behaviours, values and ways of life. It also asks why, after migration, some aspects of people's lifestyles and dispositions are kept and reproduced over generations, while other aspects change in accordance with new social stimuli.

### **3.5 Implications for studying cultural identities of diasporic young people**

This section discusses how the theories and concepts reviewed above contribute to the design of my theoretical research and analytical framework. If, for Hall, cultural identities are constituted or constructed through representations, for Bourdieu, cultural identities are embodied or embedded in practice. In this vein, this study aims to understand the real life experiences of British Chinese young people (aged 13-18) from their reflective accounts and explicit representations (data gained from interviews and participatory photographic workshops), as well as unconscious and dispositional perceptions and actions (data gained from participant observation). This study analyses the structure of two fields within which the participants live: media sphere and education, in terms of capital and discourses that shape their experiences and positioning. Furthermore, cultural identities are formed and based on past experiences, represented by present accounts and practices, and continue to influence their future decisions and actions. To sum up, this research explores cultural identity in terms of representations and practices in space (in different fields) and time (past, present and future). Figure 5 shows a set of theoretical propositions for investigating the cultural identities of British Chinese young people.



**Figure 5: Dynamics of the cultural identities of British Chinese young people**

Hall's theories of cultural identity deconstruct the 'us/them' dichotomy and emphasise the hybrid and changing nature of cultural identities. Thus in each research setting, this study pays attention to the ways in which cultural identities of a diaspora have been constituted and represented by different and sometimes contradictory discourses from both the country of origin and the country of migration. Bourdieu's theory, on the other hand, helps to analyse the positioning, strategies and practices of migrant families. This study uses the concept of capital to account for the ways in which migrant families utilize and convert their existing forms of capital to achieve upward social mobility in their country of settlement. Thus, the cultural identities of diasporic young people are not only shaped by place of origin or fixed cultural patterns, but also intertwined with different factors such as class, gender, age

and length of settlement. The diverse representations and practices that constitute cultural identities in a diaspora are related to the amount of variation in the cultural capital that members of diasporas can call upon (Song, 2003) and the different ways in which they negotiate or resist imposed and unwanted images and identities (Sharma, 2005).

During this process of negotiating cultural identities, different forms of racism and othering experienced by participants should be considered in order to understand the contexts and experiences of these diasporic teenagers. In traditional forms, racism and othering towards Chinese people in Britain were based on drawing attention to a negative way to particular embodied physiological differences such as the shape of oriental eyes or mimicking Chinese speech forms. New forms of racism are in relation to an essentialized understanding of 'culture'. The differences in cultural background, language and behaviours were used as markers for exclusion. Evidence provided by many authors (Song, 1999; Parker 2000; Chau & Yu, 2001; Adamson et al., 2009) indicates that British Chinese people are subject to considerable discrimination and inequalities. In school settings, Francis and Archer (2007) and Mau (2013) report that British Chinese pupils, who were often assumed to be exempt from racism by teachers due to their high academic achievement, in fact experienced a range of forms of racism on a daily basis such as 'light racial jokes' and 'cultural exorcising' stereotypes. Meanwhile, many Chinese within the British Chinese community (see section 6.2.3 and 10.4.3) cited the unbreakable bloodline, the physiognomy, the necessity of learning Chinese language and Chinese culture as essential qualities of 'Chineseness'. The experiences of different forms racism/othering shaped the perceptions, social activities and identities of British Chinese young people.

This study also stresses the importance of this particular age group (aged 13-18) in the enquiry of cultural identities. In many social disciplines, adolescence has been recognised as an important stage of identity formation. It is a period in which young people 'address key questions about their values and ideals, their future occupation or career, and their sexual identity' (Buckingham, 2008, p. 2). It is necessary to recognise the critical stage of

adolescence where these young people consciously seek out explanations for their origin, justifications for their positions in society and directions for their unknown future. The particular stage of adolescence cannot be separated from investigations into cultural identity. Chapter 4 will further discuss issues surrounding migration, young people and media.

Furthermore, since cultural identities are analysed through representations and practice, the interpretations of these representations and practice will inevitably be influenced by the researcher's background, experiences and cultural identities. Therefore, it is necessary to provide reflexive accounts of my own 'positioning', attitudes and actions in research alongside the analysis. I will address these issues in the methodology chapter and throughout the analysis.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

As shown above, the focus in both 'culture' and 'identity' studies has experienced a discursive turn from stable, essentialized and fixed entities towards fragmented, multiple and ever changing representations. Cultural identity is hereby reformulated as situated and momentary identifications with particular subject positions limited or empowered by discourses and different forms of capitals available within a given time and place. In this sense, this study investigates the cultural identities of diasporic young people as a changing process in time and in space. It is located in the interrelations between their cultural heritage and their lived experiences (research question 1), the constant negotiations with various discourses that impose fixed identities (research question 2), and the decisions and actions taken to maintain or improve current positions for future progress (research question 3). The key concepts discussed in this chapter such as hybridity, interculturality, habitus and capital will be applied in the analysis chapters. The next chapter then discusses how this multiplicity of cultural identities is manifested and managed in the discussion of migration, youth and media.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Migration, Youth and Media**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In contemporary migration studies, the definition and parameters of the key concepts such as diaspora and transnationalism have been discussed and theorized extensively. This chapter puts the children of immigrants—the second or subsequent generation of young people—at the heart of the debates. Previous studies argued that the children of migrants have a different relationship to diaspora, or a severed tie to their family origins. With a critical review of the concepts of diaspora and transnationalism, this study identifies the second and subsequent generation youth as inhabitants of diaspora and explores the existence, intensity and impact of their transnationalism. This chapter then draws attention more specifically to issues of global youth culture and media usage among diasporic youth. The theories and concepts reviewed in this chapter offer guidance to address the first research question of this study, which explores the impact of diasporic consciousness and transnational ties on the lives of second or subsequent generation Chinese migrant children. Meanwhile, recognising the importance of youth culture and global media in the lives of these young people provides directions for answering the second research question, as one of its inquiries is to explore the ways in which these diasporic youth negotiate their belonging and construct their identities in the consumption of media and global youth culture.

#### **4.2 Young people in diaspora**

##### **4.2.1 Ideal diaspora**

The word diaspora derives from the Greek verb *diasperien*, where the Greek preposition *dia* means ‘through or over’ and ‘*sperien*’ to ‘sow or scatter’ seeds (Cohen, 1997). It draws attention to how these disposed or scattered seeds, which carry ancestral memories and reproductive capacity, have grown and lived in different soil and climate conditions. The experiences of forced exile, communal suffering, tenacious identity, and a sense of loss and longing for the homeland have become central aspects of Jewish cultural and political

discourses. This classic form of diaspora is also applied to discuss the Middle Passage, the transatlantic slave trade and the mass movement of Africans in slavery to the Americas. The early discussions of diaspora were firmly rooted in a conceptual 'homeland'. For example, Robin Cohen (2008) classifies five different forms of diasporic community based on the relationship between the homeland and the place of dispersal for migrants: victim (African and Armenian); labour (Indian); trade (Chinese and Lebanese); imperial (British) and cultural (Caribbean). Clifford summarized the main features of diaspora as 'a history of dispersal, myth/memories of homeland, alienation in the host country, desires for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship' (Clifford, 1994, p. 305). This classic model of diaspora has been criticized for relying too narrowly on the Jews as the illustration of whom or what is a diaspora, and very few contemporary diasporas displays all the characteristics.

The so-called 'Chinese diaspora' is an example of this diversity, making us question whether so many different people can actually be grouped together, and what the consequences are of doing so? As shown in Chapter 2, the Chinese diaspora in the UK could potentially include people as diverse as Chinese mariners and coolies of the East India Company; Chinese contract labourers in the First World War; seafarers from the south and east of China in the Second World War; Hong Kong peasants who later brought the Chinese catering boom to post-war Britain; ethnic Chinese migrants from places in Southeast Asia (such as Vietnam and Malaysia) in the 1970s; and Chinese students and businessmen from China since the 1990s. Apart from these distinctive historical experiences, the Chinese diaspora contains many journeys to different parts of the globe, each with its own history and particularities. Chinese in Britain have a different, although related, history to Chinese in America, Canada and Southeast Asia. Given these differences, can we still speak meaningfully of a Chinese diaspora as one single category? With the increase in cross-border communication and exchange, facilitated by technological advances, 'time-space compression', 'a shrinking world' and 'deterritorialization' have been seen as the most significant features of globalization (Giddens, 1996; Held & McGrew, 2003). The term



‘diaspora’ needs to capture the impact of globalization that brings new features to contemporary diasporic experiences.

#### **4.2.2 The subsequent generations of migrants in a diaspora**

Rather than viewing diaspora as a categorization of people, Steven Vertovec (1999) emphasises the ways in which multiple meanings of diaspora are generated in people’s lives. Based on his ethnographic work in Trinidad, Vertovec provides three meanings of diaspora:

1. diaspora as social form
2. diaspora as a type of consciousness
3. diaspora as a mode of cultural production

According to Vertovec, the first meaning, diaspora as social form, has been most commonly used, as indicated by the literature shown above. It is a social category characterized by ‘a triadic relationship between (a) globally dispersed yet collectively self-identified ethnic groups, (b) the territorial states and contexts where such groups reside, and (c) the homeland states and contexts whence they or their forebears came’ (Vertovec, 1999, p. 5). The triadic relationship has been observed among the first generation diaspora population in the sphere of political orientations and economic strategies. For example, the active transnational economic activities of Chinese and Indian diaspora, such as money transactions, investment and business between the settlement country and homeland, have been described in detail and discussed by many scholars (Vertovec, 1999; Benton & Gomez, 2008). This definition recognises the children of immigrants as inhabitants of diaspora. But it must be noted that their experiences are different from those of their forebears that involved physically departing a homeland and settling into a new place.

The diaspora consciousness describes a variety of experiences, a state of mind and a sense of identity. Clifford (1994) borrowed W. E. B. Du Bois’s concept of ‘double consciousness’ (Du Bois, 1903) to describe diasporic individuals’ awareness of ‘decentred attachments, of being simultaneously

home away from home or here and there, or British and something else' (Vertovec, 1999, p. 8). This diaspora consciousness can be constituted negatively by experiences of discrimination and exclusion. But it also can be produced positively through identification with global historical cultural and political forces, such as the discourse of the rise of economic and political power of China in the case of this study. This 'double consciousness' stimulates the need for diasporic individuals to connect with others, home or away, who share the same 'route' and 'roots'. In a global era, the bonds of diaspora are no longer fixed by migration or exclusive territorial claims; rather they are 'held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination' (Cohen, 1996, p. 516).

Furthermore, diaspora consciousness, which consists of the awareness of multi-locality and the fractured memory of the homeland, provides the resources to produce a multiplicity of histories, 'communities' and identities. Early diaspora studies emphasise the symbolic and normative significance of the 'homeland' in the lives of diasporic members. Recent studies of diaspora recognise that not all diasporas sustain an ideology of return. Rather, members of diaspora have 'a homing desire' (Brah, 1996, p. 197), which is laid in multiple places and imagined within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries. Rather than merely representing a realistic location, homeland formed an imagination based on stories heard, representations seen or lived experiences and memories of a locality. In this way, the cultural identities in a diaspora, as Stuart Hall argues, is always 'constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth' (Hall, 1990, p.226).

Several authors (Laguerre, 1998; Radhakrishnan, 2003; Morawska, 2011) explore the meaning or imagination of 'homeland' in diaspora members and its role in shaping their identities and relations with the host country. These representations of the homeland have often been described either (and most commonly) as beautified idealizations, or in an antagonistic mode in images of misery/persecution/abuse and the like (Radhakrishnan, 2003). Morawska (2011) compared representations of the homeland between twentieth-century and present-day lower-class Polish migrants in the US and the UK. She finds that their imaginations of the homeland are more complex, often

contradictory, dynamic and 'untidy' than those common beautified or antagonistic depictions. More interestingly, the imagined 'homeland' is not fixed merely on one specific locality or real experiences in the place of origin. It is in the process of integration into the host society, as diasporic members mix and blend homeland and host-country customs and traditions into distinct, ethnic patterns, that these immigrants internalize the idea of and attachment to the symbolic homeland. From the view of a diasporic paradigm, the meaning of homeland, or ethnic origin, or in this case, China, 'can no longer be limited to the more or less fixed area of its official spacial and cultural boundaries nor can it be held up as providing the authentic authoritative, and uncontested standard for all things Chinese' (Ang, 1998, p. 225). From this perspective, this study attempts to piece together British Chinese young peoples' fractured memory or 'imaginings' of their place of origin (see Chapter 6). In the process this study explores how their 'diaspora consciousness', if they have any, is placed and manipulated in their choices of learning a language (see Chapter 9), preferences in media consumption (see Chapter 8), and positioning in the context of British schooling (see Chapter 8) and British society (see Chapter 10).

The final set of meanings of diaspora refers to the production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena with the globalized processes of cultural hybridization, negotiation and transformation (Vertovec, 1999). Avtar Brah (1996) emphasises that diaspora is a 'space' inhabited and constructed by both the relocated and the non-migrated, rather than a category that is defined based on a specific place of origin. In this way, diaspora fixate not on a certain place of origin or particular experiences, but on a process or space where both diasporic individuals and natives interact, negotiate and construct. As Stuart Hall said,

The diaspora experience ... is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity,' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity.

(Hall, 1990, p. 235)

As discussed extensively in Chapter 3, exploring the identities of young people in diasporas is less concerned with defining one or more given entity, but a perspective that 'acknowledges the ways in which identities have been and continue to be transformed through relocation, cross-cultural exchange and interaction' (Gillespie, 1995, p. 7). The diasporic youth, whose primary socialization has taken place within the cross-currents of differing cultural fields, do not always integrate to the host country seamlessly, nor do they maintain a desire of return to homeland and mechanically reproduce the cultural heritage of their origin. Many studies have identified that the second and subsequent generations often have a sense of difference from the mainstream, or in some cases alienation (Khan, 2000; Hoodfar, 2003; Mau, 2014). The awareness of difference reinforced by both the host society and their own diaspora propels these young people to occupy an in-between space, or to be 'trapped outside of belonging' (Hirji, 2009, p. 5). Meanwhile, the political and economic changes in their places of origin also have impact on their cultural identifications in their host society (see further discussion of transnationalism in Section 4.3). The prime example is the sudden change of attitudes towards young Muslims as targets of suspicion in America and Britain after the 9/11 attack in America and the 7/7 attack in Britain. In the case of the Chinese diaspora, the rise of economic and political power of China also changed the perceptions of China, Chinese and Chinese in Britain in British mainstream discourse.

Therefore, these young people, as part of the diaspora, often self-consciously select, syncretize and elaborate facets of culture and identity from more than one heritage. Following this vein, the key research questions of this study explore how the diasporic youth imagine and represent their ethnic origin and how their lived experiences in their host country have shaped these representations. This study is also interested to examine the extent to which they identify themselves with their current place of living and their 'imagined homeland'. During this process, this study recognises that both the place of living and the place of origin of diasporic members undergo constant production and reproduction of multi-localities, traditions, customs, socio-political discourses and other identity markers.

### **4.3 Second-generation transnationalism**

Apart from 'diaspora,' the term 'transnationalism' is also used to describe the living experience of migrants under the influence of globalization. Both terms emphasise the ways in which globalization has increased social, economic and political interconnectedness across national borders and cultures. Both terms challenge traditional ways of identity construction based on territory, and enable individuals, especially the second and subsequent generation of migrants, to sustain multiple identities from a variety of settings.

#### **4.3.1 Situated studies of transnationalism**

By the late 1980s, the concept of 'transnationalism' was employed by a group of cultural anthropologists such as Nina Glick Schiller, Cristina Szanton-Blanc and Linda Basch in migration and diaspora studies of US-destined immigrants. For these scholars, transnationalism is proposed as an alternative way of understanding contemporary migration in contrast with the old assimilation framework in migration studies.

The earlier assimilation framework in international migration suggests that migrants would sever their homeland attachments as they became assimilated into the countries in which they settle. This framework assumes that immigrants would steadily learn and adopt the language, culture, value and behavioural patterns of the receiving society and reject those of the homeland. However, for Basch and colleagues, the lives of today's immigrants do not match the simple one-way 'assimilation' process. Instead, immigrants adapt in the receiving country while continuing to look back to their place of origin and building links with both their ancestral homeland and their country of settlement (Basch, et al., 1994). As a perspective to understanding the ongoing experiences of migrants in the global era, transnationalism is defined as

[A] process by which trans-migrants, through their daily activities, forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic and political relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement, and through which they create transnational social fields that cross national borders.

(Basch et al., 1994, p. 6)

This transnational paradigm focuses on the increasing interconnectedness of flows of people, goods, information and symbols triggered by international migration (Çaglar, 2001). It tries to examine how ordinary individuals live their everyday lives across borders and the consequences of their activities for their sending and receiving countries (Levitt & Waters, 2002a). In their research on US-based immigrants, Levitt and Waters (2002b) demonstrate that people who live within transnational social fields are powerfully influenced by more than one social, economic and political system. These researchers are not only interested in migrants' actual behaviours, but also how migrants construct their identities and imagine the social groups they belong to when they live within transnational social fields, where they can use resources and discursive elements from multiple settings (Levitt & Waters, 2002a).

Transnationalism in migration studies is not free from controversy. A major criticism of transnationalism is that it places a false dichotomy (or trichotomy) between transnationalism and assimilation (or multiculturalism). It should not be viewed as an alternative to assimilation, but rather 'as one possible variant of assimilation (Kivisto, 2001). It is problematic to suggest that all migrants engage in transnationalism. Given the lack of research on transnationalism among second and subsequent generations of immigrants, the density of the transnational ties of these children are questionable (Vertovec, 2009). There is also a danger of neglecting the political constraints on activities across borders. The emergence of transnational spaces raises questions and concerns about migrants' political participation and membership in nationally bounded societies. For example, in 2011, Europe's top three leaders pronounced the failure of 'multiculturalism' in Germany, Britain and France and emphasised the importance of assimilation and integration of minority groups (Crumley, 2011). Nationalist and religious movements are attempting to counter globalization and hybridity. Islamophobic and anti-immigration sentiment is on the rise in Europe, with the fear of losing national identity.

Notwithstanding criticism of the term 'transnationalism', it has emphasised the interactions, interdependency and tensions between countries in a globalized world and their impact on the current lives of immigrants and their offspring. This concept is linked to the research questions of this study that investigate

how the children of immigrants perceive their place of origin and its culture; how they engage with their parents' homelands both through media and in real life; and what role these transnational practices play in their lives and life decisions (see detailed discussion in Chapter 6 and 7).

#### **4.3.2 The conception of 'China' and Chinese 'community'**

In the case of a Chinese diaspora, the increasing transnational connections also invoke debates around the concepts of 'Greater China' and 'Cultural China' in the 1980s and 90s. These two concepts were used to describe the transnational connections and multiple representations of 'China and the Chinese', transcending a fixed nation state or a geographical location.

'Greater China' in scholarly discourse often refers to 'the system of interactions among China, Hong Kong and Taiwan and people of Chinese descent around the world' (Harding, 1993, p. 683).<sup>17</sup> This concept has been questioned on its desirability, range and extent of integration between these Chinese communities (Carstens, 2003). The second term, 'Cultural China' (Tu, 1994) is proposed in order to de-centre the cultural authority of geopolitical China, but redefine 'Chineseness' from the periphery, or the Chinese communities outside the cultural centres. This term suggests a desire to recuperate the 'true and core' values of Chinese culture maintained in peripheral areas that have been weakened or eradicated on the mainland China because of its political regime. However, the discourses of maintaining or rescuing true 'Chineseness' from the China centre, also implies the existence of an essentialist concept of 'Chineseness', which Ang has described as the 'cultural China' in peripheries (1998). Furthermore, the term was proposed to rescue the 'Chineseness' in crisis when China, the homeland of the peripheries, was perceived as unable to transform itself into a truly modern society in the 1980s. It fails to capture the changing nature of both the centres and peripheries. The pervasive and extremely influential realm of the transnational sharing of Chinese popular culture is also absent in this concept (see discussion in Sections 4.4 and 4.5).

This study recognizes that geo-political-cultural constructs of 'China' and 'Chinese' are and always have been contested concepts that encompass multiple, complex, contradictory and sometimes ill-defined associations,

meanings and identifications. Three examples of this complexity can be seen in relation to Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan. China resumed full sovereignty of Hong Kong and Macau in the 1990s when the short term leases negotiated with Britain and Portugal expired. Since 1997 there has been continuously growing reintegration between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong/ Macau. In the past a few years, the intensification of political conflicts between HK and China has resulted in collective political outbursts, such as the 2014 Umbrella Protests<sup>18</sup> and the 2016 Mong Kok civil unrest.<sup>19</sup> The island of Taiwan has had an administration separate from the PRC since the defeated Kuomintang escaped there in 1949. The PRC sees Taiwan as a breakaway province that will eventually be part of the country again, but many Taiwanese want a separate nation. While this political conflicts and discontinuity may have led to a sense of separateness from the PRC for people in Hong Kong and Taiwan, they are often identified, by themselves and the outsiders, as ethnic Chinese (huaren, 华人). While among many resident overseas Chinese, who come from Hong Kong or Taiwan may not politically identify themselves with the PRC (Parker, 1995), there are many for whom the political divisions present little barrier in daily interactions in the overseas context. As in the past, the Chinese communities contain within themselves considerable regional, linguistic, political and cultural diversity. In order to be able to represent the different perceptions and identifications of participants in relations to the two concepts of 'China and Chinese', this study still adopted the growing conception of 'Greater China', or more accurately, of 'China in the world' when carrying out the research. It does not assume people whose origin were from Hong Kong, Macau or Taiwan were essentially different from those from the PRC unless the data reflected differences. This study does not overemphasize the difference between the PRC and Hong Kong/Taiwan, as even within the so-called 'mainland China', there are diversities in terms of regions, dialects/languages, cultural traditions, geographies, socio-economic development, and ethnicities that should not be ignored when discussing what it means to be part of the wider Chinese diaspora (see discussions in section 9.3 and 9.4).



The complexity and diversity discussed above helps us to focus our understanding of the term 'community' and how it is used in critical cultural studies such as this. The idea of an 'ethnic community', often connotes a small or mid-range collectivity in which there is a high degree of mutual association arising from shared knowledge, practices, ways of speaking and behaving. within a certain ethnic group. This conceptualization of 'community' suggested that members of the community, hold culture in common meaning not only that they think and act in similar ways but share certain values and beliefs. As the concept of 'culture' needs to be understood reflexively in order to avoid simplifying and stereotyping individuals, (see Section 3.3), this study adopts a critical and reflexive approach towards the understanding 'ethnic community' as social spaces of diversity, motion and creativity (Alleyne 2002).

#### **4.3.3 Defining 'second-generation'**

Criticisms of transnationalism have inspired a body of work using a transnational lens to explore whether transnational practices will persist among second-generation migrants. However, within migration and diaspora studies, the 'second-generation migrant' is not a clear-cut category. Some scholars use 'second-generation' to incorporate all the children of migrants. Others use this term to refer only to persons born in the host country of two foreign-born parents (Rumbaut, 2002). These ways of defining the 'second-generation' are often found to be problematic, given the extent of ethnic mixing of populations today. For example, how does one categorize children whose parents are from two different ethnic or cultural groups? In the present study, there are participants with one parent from Hong Kong and the other from Vietnam. Does this child possibly belong to the second-generation of two or more immigrant groups? What complicates this further is that some parents were born ethnically Chinese yet raised outside of China, in Malaysia, Thailand or Vietnam, and later migrated and had children in the UK. Do their children belong to the group of second-generation Chinese, econd-generation Malaysian / Thai / Vietnamese, or third-generation ethnic Chinese? Clearly, increasingly complex possibilities for intermarriage and population mobility are going to make it more difficult to rely on straightforward categories.

This study acknowledges the complex picture of mixing populations, but also recognises that the distinction outlined above serves to alert us to the most common difference among children of immigrants. While discussing many studies about second-generation immigrants in the next section, this study does not use the term 'second-generation' but 'young British Chinese' to refer to a more settled population of young Chinese in Britain, including British-born Chinese young people and all Chinese children who complete the majority of their education and socialization after immigrating into Britain.

#### **4.3.4 'Second-generation' transnationalism**

In the past two decades, there has been a rapidly growing academic interest in the study of second-generation immigrants and transnationalism, respectively. However, it was not until recently that scholars drew these two concepts together.

Long before research into transnationalism and the children of migrants, a substantial body of research had been applied to the experiences of the second generation within their receiving nations (H. Lee, 2008). Much of the earlier work, dominated by the assimilation model, is focused on the integration of migrants and children in their host society. Measuring their level of integration is realized by measuring their 'success' in terms of education and employment (Gans, 1992; Jensen & Chitose, 1994). These studies assume that children of immigrants would assimilate into their family's adopted homeland rather than their parents' ancestral homeland (Quirke, Potter, & Conway, 2009). Many of these researchers conclude that if immigrants were to achieve upward mobility in socio-economic terms in the receiving country, assimilation has to occur (Alba & Nee, 1997). However, many scholars have noticed the possibility of 'second-generation decline', which suggests that children of immigrants could do worse than their parents or society as a whole with differing amounts of cultural and social capital (Levitt & Waters, 2002a). Contrary to the assimilation model, some studies suggest that the best scenario for second-generation migrant youth is to be embedded in a co-ethnic community and reduce the loss of their home community languages and culture. This is characterized by a lack of intergenerational conflict, the presence of co-ethnics as friends, and full

bilingualism in the second-generation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Through ties to their parents' culture and homeland, the second-generation could facilitate upward social mobility in their receiving country.

In the late 1990s, Levitt and Waters' work opened up the 'first round of research on the transnational practices of the second generation' (Levitt & Waters, 2002b, p. 3). The collection of papers focuses on new immigrants to America since the 1980s, of which 88 per cent came from Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia. Drawing on longitudinal survey data of the transnational activities among children of immigrants, their ethnographic work suggests that their respondents' lives could not be adequately understood without reference to their ancestral homes. Since the mid-1990s, there has been a shift away from concerns of how the second or subsequent generation assimilate to the host country towards a focus on how these young people negotiate their 'in between' positions and multiple identities (such as Amit-Talai & Wulff, 1995; Gillespie, 1995; de Block, 2002). Many scholars started to explore second-generation transnationalism in different countries. Helen Lee and a group of scholars offered a collection of papers with a broad picture of the second-generation transnational practices of a number of migrant communities in Australia (H. Lee, 2008). In Britain, Quirke and colleagues also provide detailed studies of the transnational practice of the second-generation Caribbean community (Quirke et al., 2009). These studies have confirmed that for a cohort of the second-generation, ties to their ancestral homeland are alive and strong; this goes a long way in furthering the understanding of second-generation individuals and their experiences in a global era.

This body of literature has also attracted doubts and criticisms: for scholars such as Kivisto (2001), transnationalism is mainly a first-generation phenomenon that disappears with the second or third generation. Alba and Nee (1997) also claimed that transnationalism is hard to sustain on a mass scale in the second and third generation. Even if they have connections with their homeland, they are often not 'thick' enough for 'transnationalism to be viable' (Alba & Nee, 1997, p. 276). In their study of the Chinese in Britain, Benton and Gomez (2008) contest transnational theories. They argue that such approaches fail to capture the dynamism of identity transformations of

migrants across generations. Stressing the differences and internal segregations among the Chinese, they concluded that 'Chinese do not have the uniform features ascribed to them by transnational theory' (Benton & Gomez, 2008, p. 4). Highlighting how various generations of British Chinese are continually engaged in reforming identities, they emphasise the growing sense of British national identification among new generations of British-born Chinese. They point out that transnational studies 'rarely explore the issue of how migrants' children view transnational migration and of their relationship to their place of birth or upbringing' (Benton & Gomez, 2008, p. 17). They accuse advocates of transnationalism of reinforcing the notion of the 'host country' and exaggerating the sense of loyalty and 'belonging' to the 'homeland' among the second generation.

As reviewed in Chapter 2, Chinese migration in Britain is complex and constantly changing over time. It would be too hasty to ascribe the same transnational ties and homeland imaginations to the various subgroups of Chinese in Britain. There are limited studies that have explored the real transnational activities and meanings of 'homeland' for the more settled population of British Chinese young people. This study attempts to explore the following questions: where do these British Chinese young people see as home? Do they imagine themselves in multiple sites of belonging (Chapter 10)? How would they maintain or manipulate dual frames of reference in different social contexts (Chapter 8 and 9)? If they do, to what extent do transnational activities such as transnational media consumption (see Chapter 7) and homeland visits (Chapter 6) influence their everyday lives and formation of cultural identities?

Apart from diasporic experiences and transnational ties, discussions of youth culture and identity offer another important dimension for understanding cultural identities of diasporic young people. Among many influences on their lives, the focus here lies specifically with the impact of youth culture and the effects of global media. Facilitated by new tele-communication technologies and increasingly globalized and hybridized media market, global and transnational youth popular culture, in the forms of media such as films, TV programmes, music and social media have spread and influenced Chinese

communities around the world. This study asks how these British Chinese young people situate their cultural roots and traditions in response to the discourses they encounter through engagement with forms of mass media (Chapter 7). How do they utilize (move away, embrace or both) their family cultural heritage in their daily interactions with their peers? To what extent does their identification with cultural characteristics of peers shape their wider cultural awareness and identities (see Chapter 9)?

#### **4.4 Youth culture**

Youth is linked to a biological and socio-psychological stage of human development but has been developed sociologically as a category for cultural analysis. Early psychological theories depicted adolescence as a stage characterized by fundamental psychological conflict. This led to a view that only when the 'crisis' is resolved successfully, is progression achieved to a healthy, integrated and coherent adulthood (Erikson, 1968). Similarly, the perceptions of youth as 'incomplete' can also be found in the sociology of youth studies. Beginning in the Chicago School of sociology, the early formal sociological academic study of youth was concerned with issues of youthful deviance and delinquency. Youth was closely connected with 'social problems' and young people were deemed to be 'at risk' because of their 'raging hormones' (Griffin, 1993). This stage-based model in both psychology and sociology has been criticized as overgeneralized (Gilligan, 1982). Many scholars acknowledge that the meaning of youth varies significantly across cultures, and particularly in relation to factors such as social class, gender and ethnicity (Condon & Stern, 1993; Schlegel, 1995; Buckingham, 2008).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the CCCS at the University of Birmingham produced what was identified as one of the foundations of contemporary youth cultural studies (Hall & Jefferson, 1993). The CCCS approach presented a critique of the way young people were represented as being essentially troubled and deviant. It shifted the focus from studying youth gangs in Britain towards style-based youth culture, looking at Skinheads, Teddy Boys and Mods (A. Bennett, 1999). Youth culture or subcultures were interpreted as a site of political social class contestation, a collective cultural resistance by (mainly working-class) youth against social structural changes in post-war Britain

(Griffin, 2001). During the 1990s and early 2000s, new notions such as 'neo-tribes' and 'lifestyle' were proposed in order to replace the concept of 'subculture' (A. Bennett, 2000; Miles, 2000; Muggleton, 2000). This body of work initiated the 'post-subcultural' turn in the study of contemporary youth culture. Informed by Weberian and postmodern analysis, rather than addressing the relations of dominance and subordination of cultural or social structures, the post-subcultural framework held that youth identities had become more reflexive, fluid and fragmented, positing individualism and free choice as key factors in youth identity formation (A. Bennett, 2011). Neo-tribalism emphasises the fluidity and temporality of collective youth cultural identities based on shared taste, aesthetics and affectivity. The neo-tribe is 'a state of mind' (A. Bennett, 1999, p. 607), a freely chosen lifestyle in contrast to subcultural theory, which emphasises the structural forces such as class, race or gender in the formation of sub-cultural groups (A. Bennett, 1999). Youth lifestyle is used to describe the ways in which young people choose certain commodities and patterns of consumption and articulate these cultural resources as personal expression (Chaney, 1996). Apart from purchasing material goods, youth lifestyle encompasses the consumption of popular culture (such as music, dancing, styles, themes and cartoons) which have proliferated in global mass media. On the other hand, the post-subcultural approach has been criticized for over-exaggerating individual autonomies and abandoning the political and structural significance of factors such as gender, class, and disability that continue to impact on the lives of young people (Blackman, 2005).

The debates between the subcultural and post-subcultural theories provide valuable critical insights for the current research of diasporic young people. The post-subcultural approach promotes the significance of ordinary cultural practice, everyday cultural consumptions and their relationship to global and transnational influences in the lives of contemporary young people. Meanwhile, within the post-structural investigations that emphasise agency, fluidity and individualization in contemporary youth cultural identities, it is still important to ask in what way ascribed features such as class, ethnicity and gender continue to play a structuring role in the making of youth cultural identities (A. Bennett, 2011).

As summarized in Chapter 2, the Chinese community in Britain has often been perceived as a harmonious, traditional and community-bounded 'model minority'. British Chinese young people are almost invisible within youth culture in Britain. It was not until the 1970s that a handful of scholars started to pay attention to the lives of second and third-generation British Chinese young people. David Parker was one of the few to examine the influence of British media representations of Chinese people and Hong Kong popular culture in the formation of young people's identities (Parker, 1995, 1998). He found that, owing to the dispersed Chinese settlement in Britain, the notion of a British Chinese youth culture was difficult to identify. The majority of his participants were obliged to help out in family-run take-aways or restaurants and had limited contact with their peers in their spare time. These factors are attributed to a lack of investment in British-based national identification, in sharp contrast to the identifications of British Black and South Asian youth. The incorporation of Hong Kong popular culture into the lives of British Chinese young people became an important feature of their cultural identities as they tried to absorb 'the best of both worlds' (Parker, 1995, p. 476). Through the circulation of Hong Kong videos among British Chinese families, popular culture provided British Chinese youth with a connection and even an eagerness to return to their parents' place of origin.

In contrast with African-Caribbean culture, often seen as fluid, cutting-edge, individualistic, creative and negotiated, Asian cultures are frequently perceived as static, collective, internally homogeneous and secluded (Sharma, 2005). As Banerjea et al (1996) vividly describe, African/African-Caribbean cultures are defined through 'youth' whereas Asian cultures are understood through 'age' and 'men with beards'. However, more recently, Yeh (2014) shows how British Chinese young people attending 'British Chinese/Oriental' club nights redefine themselves by drawing on local and global popular culture, especially music. She points out that the discourse of Chinese in Britain as a model ethnicity actually disconnects British Chinese youth from wider youth cultures and further creates and sustains the marginalizing effect of racial-based stereotypes. The fact that these Chinese/Oriental nights organised by British Chinese young artists and

musicians are accepted and hailed by clubbers provided a sense of affirmation for many British Chinese young people, who previously felt invisible and excluded in Britain but now celebrate their hybrid identities.

These studies demonstrate that global and local youth cultures provide rich resources for British Chinese young people to construct and perform cultural identities derived from their family heritage and possibly discover some sense of belonging. However, studies of the youth identities of school-aged British Chinese pupils, who are often seen as 'model pupils' as well as 'nerds' and 'geeks', are largely absent. This study aims to contribute to this field by looking at how British Chinese pupils respond to and consume global popular culture, and how they construct their identities by choosing and incorporating British, Chinese and global youth cultures (see Chapter 8). This study also explores one of the most important everyday cultural practices of young people: the patterns of diasporic youth media consumption and its impact on the formation of their cultural identities.

#### **4.5 Diasporic youth and media**

With the advance of communication technology as a core aspect of globalizing trends, the media perform a crucial role in facilitating the interplay of cultural power and the flows of deterritorialized cultural phenomena. Among diasporic youth, media are often identified as key sites for providing representations of and connections between imagined communities and negotiating identities between cultures (Georgiou, 2006; Kama & Malka, 2013; Dhoest, 2015). Empirical studies of media and diaspora or ethnic minorities have emerged as inter-disciplinary topics within media studies, migration studies and cultural studies, within which concurrent lines of research co-exist (Bonfadelli, Bucher, & Piga, 2007; Adriaens, 2012). This study takes one such perspective, looking at media users' selection of media - both mainstream and ethnic - and interpretations of media representations, concentrating on the role of media in the construction of hybrid identities (Gillespie, 1995; Tsagarousianou, 2001; Marôpo, 2014).

Studies of media use and ethnic minorities often use a series of terms to distinguish different media types: 'host media', 'mainstream media',



'homeland media', 'minority media', 'ethnic media', 'transnational media' and 'diasporic media'. This study uses 'mainstream media' to refer to media produced by and for mainstream society. In the UK context, mainstream media describes not only UK national media, but also foreign media (mainly American and western European) available through cable distribution. The term 'ethnic media' is used in a broader sense to include media produced by and for immigrants and ethnic and linguistic minorities. It may be local, national or global, produced in the country of settlement or the country of origin, delivered in the language of the country of settlement or the country of origin and distributed through old or new telecommunication technologies (Adriaens, 2012).

As discussed in Chapter 3, it is partly through representations that individuals construct their identities. Media representations establish dichotomies such as 'us/them', 'insider/outsider', 'east/west' and 'citizen/foreigners', affirm social and cultural diversity, and most importantly, provide space in which identities can be confirmed and reinstated or challenged and changed. In the early 1980s, Stuart Hall (1981) identified 'television's basic grammar of race' and three basic stereotypes for representing black people in Britain - slave, native and entertainer - which led to major debates around racial stereotyping through television. Since then, ethnic stereotypes and representations in the media continue to engender debate and discussion among ethnic minority viewers and the landscape Hall described has continued to change.

Television is regarded as an essential tool to provide resources for both the deconstruction and construction of identities (Sharma, 2005). This strand of research often identifies media as a vehicle through which connections are maintained with the country of family origin and also established with the country of residence and its culture. These studies investigate diasporic young people's media consumption patterns and interpretations of media representations in order to understand their ambivalent identifications in the context of media consumption (Samad, 1998; Sreberny, 2000; Tsagarousianou, 2001). The research focus is largely on how diasporic youth 'construct new forms of identity, shaped by, but at the same time reshaping images and meanings circulated in the media and the market' (Gillespie, 1995, p. 2). One of the classic examples is Marie Gillespie's (1995)

ethnographic study of the role of television and film in the formation and transformation of identity among young Punjabi Londoners. Hindi films and ethnic media consumption create transnational ties between India and its traditional culture and diasporic families. Talking about TV among Punjabi young people is seen as a crucial forum for negotiating identities between peer and parental cultures.

There are several limitations worth noticing in this strand of research on media, identity and youth. Firstly, when looking at cultural identities through the use and interpretation of media, it is important to acknowledge that ethno-cultural background is no more significant than other factors such as age, gender and social class. Studies have shown that television preferences of minority and majority youth are very similar. In certain cases, gender and religion are more significant than ethno-cultural differences in media use patterns (Milikowski, 2000; Sinardet & Mortelmans, 2006; Dhoest, 2015).

Secondly, diasporic groups are not homogeneous but possess considerable intra-group differences. The Chinese ethnic media available in the UK (see Chapter 2) are not a homogeneous mass but provide a diverse range of choices. In the era of technologized globalization, diaspora groups and media landscape have changed noticeably, which entails that research into identity and media should emphasise diversity rather than homogeneity (Georgiou, 2006; Sreberny, 2000). Researchers need to pay attention to 'what ethnic minorities *themselves* might think, want or say about media representations, media involvement in their everyday lives, or their hopes for the future' (Cottle, 2000, p. 23).

Thirdly, in the analysis of young people's response to media representations, researchers have long contended that young people's ability to negotiate media messages is related to and limited by their social and cultural experiences, including social background and peer group affiliations (Millington & Wilson, 2010). Although young people possess the ability to read media messages critically, these reflective interpretations are context-dependent and rarely influence behaviour in other social settings. For example, Millington and Wilson (2010) demonstrate that Vancouver High

school boys had a strong tendency to criticize media portrayals of gender while simultaneously celebrating hegemonic masculinities in PE class. Therefore, apart from investigating the media use patterns and interpretations of British Chinese young people, this study also questions how these interpretations are enacted in different social settings.

Furthermore, since the mid-1990s the internet revolution has been transforming the intercultural character of media access and use, so deepening the engagement of young people with a wide range of online cultural and political forms (Buckingham & Willett, 2006; Harris, 2008; Olson, 2008). More recently, the boom in mobile phone and iPad technology, and its impact on the behaviour of young media users have not been captured in earlier studies. At the time of writing, work on youth and new media, especially in relation to online social networks and other forms of internet-based and mobile communication, is quickly developing into an area of academic interest (Chu & Choi, 2010; Davidson & Martellozzo, 2013; Lauricella, et al., 2014). According to Ofcom<sup>20</sup> reports of children's (aged 5-15) media use and attitudes in the UK (Ofcom, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014), while more than 93% of households have PC or laptop Internet access, there has been a significant increase in ownership, access and use of tablet computers among the 12-15 age group (from 4% in 2011 to 43% in 2014). This increase is consistent for all socio-economic groups. From 2011 to 2014, the estimated time that children aged 12-15 in the UK spent online increased from 14.9 to 17.2 hours per week (drawing from Ofcom estimates). However, research is still emerging on the use of new media among diasporic youth and its impact on their lives and cultural identities. Several early scholars of these transformations discussed the use of internet in the constructions and representations of diasporic cultural and political identities (Parker & Song, 2009; Plaza, 2009; Metykova, 2010; Denis & Paulos, 2011;). It has been argued that the use of the internet among first-generation migrants has played an increasingly important role in facilitating the consumption of culturally specific material, which relocates the home territories into virtual space, reproduces ethnic cultural practices and transnational communications, and further recreates their diasporic identities (Panagakos, 2003; T. Kang, 2009; Y. Kang & Yang, 2011).

Plaza (2009, p. 50) has argued that internet-based activities have reconnected aspects of the heritage, cultural values and practices with the 'second generation's feelings of object loss and cultural mourning' (Plaza, 2009, p. 50), and thus, facilitate the emergence of new hybrid identities (Parker & Song, 2009). However, later studies (Denis & Paulos, 2011) observed the heterogeneity of media use within the second-generation migrants. More qualitative studies will be needed in order to understand whether and how the internet has become a tool that enhances transnational communications, contributing to the construction of cultural identities among diasporic young people.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has placed young people at the centre of the theoretical debates surrounding the concepts of diaspora and transnationalism within the field of contemporary migration studies with a specific focus on media. Debates in diaspora studies challenge the idea of fixed geographical places of origin and emphasise the on-going process of constructing a hybrid diasporic space, consciousness and identity. Transnationalism, on the other hand, emphasises the importance of interconnections between the place of origin and the place of residence in the lives of immigrants and their children. Notwithstanding the criticisms, both theories have provided valuable analytical insights for this study. As both theories emphasise the importance of the symbolic meaning of 'homeland/origin' for migrants and their children, this study explores the ways in which British Chinese young people aged 13-18 perceive and represent their familial/cultural origin, and the impact of transnational experiences in their lives and construction of identities. Centring the inquiry on diasporic youth, one of the foci of this study is their consumption of transnational media products and global youth culture. The way to investigate this theme, however, is not only to provide a descriptive report of their behaviours and narratives, but also to examine its associations with young people's life experiences while living in Britain. It is only then that their 'ties to homeland' and identities will become meaningful.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research questions for this study in more detail and then links them to the research design and methods adopted. Owing to the nature and practicalities of the inquiry, this study inclines towards a constructionist paradigm, drawing mainly on qualitative methods but also employing quantitative methods for exploratory and complementary reasons. This chapter provides a detailed description of the procedure used for data collection and analysis. It emphasises the use of data triangulation and the role of researcher's reflexivity in achieving reliability and validity. Finally, this chapter discusses the ethical considerations in the implementation of the chosen methods.

#### **5.2 Research questions**

##### ***Past***

As shown in Chapter 4, discussions within transnationalism and diaspora studies emphasise the importance of the 'homeland' and/or 'origins' in the lives of migrant families. The cultural identities of British Chinese young people are constituted in part by their past familial migratory experiences. Therefore, the first research question concerns the relationship between British Chinese young people and their family's ethnic origin and culture, and how this relationship contributes to the formation of their cultural identities (see Chapter 6). The key sub-questions include:

- How do British Chinese young people interpret the discourses of 'China and the Chinese' in the British media? How do these discourses shape their perceptions of 'China and the Chinese'?
- How do British Chinese young people perceive and represent 'China and the Chinese'?
- To what extent do the transnational experiences of British Chinese young people contribute to their perceptions and representations of 'China and the Chinese'?

- How do British Chinese young people position themselves in the discourse of the 'imagined' China and the Chinese'?

To gain a comprehensive understanding of these young people's perceptions of 'China and the Chinese', this study used a questionnaire survey to gather an overall description of 'China and the Chinese', group discussions about media and individual interviews to encourage elaborations of experiences and opinions, and a photographic workshop to generate visual representations of 'China and the Chinese'.

### ***Present***

Cultural identity is represented by discourse and embodied in everyday practice. The second research question aims to understand the lived experiences of British Chinese young people in London; how the meanings of being 'British Chinese' operate in practice in different cultural, political and geographical contexts; and how, and under what circumstances, these young people may construct their identities utilizing resources available to them by asserting their 'differences' or 'sameness' to a particular group. This research question is mainly situated in three major fields: the media, mainstream schools, and weekend Chinese schools. The key sub-questions include:

- How do British Chinese young people use different forms of media in the course of their everyday lives? (Chapter 7)
  - o What are the media consumption patterns of British Chinese young people?
  - o How important are forms of ethnic Chinese media in their general media use experiences?
  - o Do they utilize ethnic Chinese media to foster their 'homeland' connections? If they do, what do these connections mean to them?
- What are the lived experiences of being British Chinese pupils in mainstream English schools? (Chapter 8)
  - o How do British Chinese pupils perceive the discourse of 'model minority' in mainstream English schools, and to what extent does the discourse of the 'model minority' affect their learning and social experiences?

- o How does the prevalent discourse in British Chinese families, such as 'valuing education' and being 'well-behaved' influence their perceptions and behaviours?
- o How do their interpretations of these discourses shape their self-identifications?
- What are the schooling experiences of British Chinese pupils in Chinese language complementary schools? (Chapter 9)
  - o What are their experiences of learning Chinese language and culture?
  - o What are their experiences of social interaction with peers?
  - o How do British Chinese young people identify themselves in relation to their learning experiences in Chinese language schools?

To answer these questions, this study conducted participant observation in four London Chinese schools and in-depth interviews with British Chinese children, their parents and Chinese school teachers.

### ***Future***

Cultural identities are constituted by past experiences, represented by present actions and are also in a constant process of 'becoming'. The third research question considers how British Chinese young people and their parents perceived the positioning and prospects of the younger generation of British Chinese in Britain (Chapter 10). The key sub-questions include:

- What are the expectations and worries of British Chinese parents for their children's futures? To what extent do these expectations influence their decisions and choices made for their children?
- What are the expectations and worries of British Chinese young people for their own futures? To what extent do these expectations influence their own decisions and choices?
- Is China part of their plan for the future? If yes, in what way?
- How do these expectations and choices shape the formation of British Chinese cultural identities?

The answers for these questions were generated from the analysis of participant observation and in-depth interviews with young British Chinese and their parents.

### **5.3 Rationale: theoretical perspective**

As shown above, the research questions are largely answered through critical interpretations of the respondents' accounts and behaviours. In this sense, the nature of the inquiry is explorative and interpretative, adopting a constructionist paradigm, which affirms that, 'all meaningful reality is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context' (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). This study seeks to understand and interpret the perceptions others have about the world while acknowledging the influence of their own personal, cultural and historical experiences. This theoretical perspective led to the choice of various qualitative methods that best reflected the goals of my research design.

The social group at the centre of this research is complex and varied, so I was conscious of the need to use a range of approaches and forms of data in order to access different aspects of individual and group dynamics. The challenges for the current study – such as limited literature concerning British Chinese children, the complexity and dispersed distribution of the British Chinese population and the limited research time in Chinese complementary schools as the main research sites – have resulted in lack of demographic information about the target population. The research question concerning patterns of media use and general opinions about 'China and the Chinese' suggest the need to identify the overall trends and patterns of these two issues among the participants. Thus, this study, while essentially qualitative in nature, also conducted a questionnaire survey in order to complement and interrogate the qualitative data analysis.

### **5.4 Research design**

By adopting multiple research methods, this study seeks to present diverse viewpoints and create an accurate and holistic understanding of the lives and identities of British Chinese young people. Figure 6 shows the three phases of this research and outlines the sequencing and prioritising of the quantitative and qualitative elements of data collection and analysis.

The first phase consisted of participant observations and two group



interviews. As a holistic and systematic tool to understand 'the culture, perspectives and practices of the people in real settings' (Hammersley, 1992, p. 24), participant observation marked the beginning of my research and ran throughout the entire process. I intensively engaged with participants in classroom settings at weekend Chinese schools for three and half years. I successfully built trusting relationships with my participants, which encouraged the behaviours and opinions of the participants to emerge in a more authentic way during our interactions. Repeated visits to Chinese schools for participant observation also made participants aware of who I was and made them comfortable with further research in the later stage. At the end of phase 1, two focus group discussions were held to put some of my early findings to the test. This period of explorative observation and group discussions provided a solid foundation for developing the design of the questionnaire and interviews.

The second phase involved the quantitative questionnaire survey in four Chinese schools. Owing to limited resources, a large-scale quantitative survey was not feasible but a small-scale survey among British Chinese pupils in four Chinese schools was more plausible and effective in terms of gathering background information about the field and identifying the general patterns of behaviours and opinions of participants. The survey was also exploratory in terms of identifying general trends of media consumption behaviours; and providing direction and focus for qualitative data in the next research phase.

Figure 6: Phases of research design.

Phases	Methods	Analysis	Results
<b>Phase 1</b> <b>Qualitative</b> <b>methods</b>	Participant observations	Coding and thematic analysis of field notes and group interview transcript	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gained preliminary knowledge about the field and participants</li> <li>2. Established connections with participants</li> <li>3. Highlighted issues to explore for questionnaire design and further interviews</li> </ol>
	Focus group discussions 1 and 2		
<b>Phase 2</b> <b>Quantitative</b> <b>methods</b>	Questionnaire surveys in four Chinese schools	SPSS analysis of nominal and numerical data	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connected results in Phase 1 and ongoing participant observation</li> <li>2. Generated interview protocols</li> </ol>
<b>Phase 3</b> <b>Qualitative</b> <b>methods</b>	Participant observations throughout the research process	Coding, thematic and discourse analysis of visual and textual data	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Constantly reflected on and modify research progress</li> <li>2. Generated codes and themes for analysis</li> <li>3. Integrated and triangulated different forms of data</li> </ol>
	Participatory photographic workshop in School N		
	Focus group discussions 3 and 4 Individual in-depth interviews		

The third phase refocused on qualitative methods to explore issues highlighted in the previous two stages. This study adopted the photography participatory workshop with the aim of actively engaging young people in the research and motivating them to express their opinions and represent their experiences in visual forms (de Block & Buckingham, 2007). In practice, the photography workshop was carried out during the same period as the questionnaire survey due to the limited time frame and access to participants in Chinese schools. The visual data generated from this method were analysed together with interview accounts to help validate, interpret and raise questions. Another four focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were followed up with questions and my hypothesis emerged from the data analysis from previous phases. Throughout the research, all the data generated was continuously re-examined and compared with my participant observation in the field.

Corresponding to the multi-methods approach in the data collection stage, the triangulation of data analysis aims to verify and interrogate results and validates arguments (Denzin, 2009). In effect, it involves the comparison of data relating to the same phenomenon but derived from different data collection methods, different phases of the fieldwork and different settings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In this study, I examined documents from the government (census data, data from DfE) and the Chinese community (reports from the Chinese community and Chinese schools). Qualitative data were coded into domains, factors and variables in Nvivo; quantitative data were processed into identical variables and factors. Thus, the two sets of data could be integrated at the level of variables. All forms of data were important components of my research, complementing, reinforcing and contradicting each other. The key issue was to investigate the varying relationship of each kind of data and the reasons behind it throughout the research process. The specific results and the reflections on the benefits and problems of data triangulation are presented in Chapter 6 to 10.

## **5.5 Data collection**

### **5.5.1 Research sites and participants**

#### ***Research sites***

This research was based mainly in four weekend Chinese complementary language schools in the north (School N), south (School S), east (School E) and west (School W) of London. This was augmented by regular home visits to five British Chinese families whose children attended these schools. The decision of where to conduct the research was at no stage straightforward because there were several underlying obstacles in approaching school-aged British Chinese young people.

As discussed in Section 2.3.1, the scattered Chinese settlement pattern makes it more difficult to approach British Chinese young people as a group (Parker, 1995; Wu, 2001). With limited resources and time, I decided to base my fieldwork in London where one third of the British Chinese population resides. The target population is British Chinese pupils (aged 13-18) in secondary or sixth form schools. The reason for choosing this particular age group is the lack of up-to-date research on the experiences and identities of British Chinese young people in this age group (see discussions in Section 2.4). However, recruiting school-aged British Chinese from mainstream schools would have been challenging and inefficient (Archer & Francis, 2006; Mau, 2013) because most schools have only a small number of ethnic Chinese pupils. Despite the Greater London area being a region with the highest concentration of British Chinese, only 1.4% of pupils in all London secondary schools were recorded as Chinese in 2014.<sup>21</sup>

I tried to recruit participants via Chinese associations and online forums. I initially contacted several Chinese associations by email but most did not reply and the one that did declined my request. I then tried to recruit participants from British Chinese online forums and social networking groups, such as the British Born Chinese group on Facebook and the British Born Chinese forum ([www.britishchineseonline.com](http://www.britishchineseonline.com)), but most members of these online forums were aged over twenty. I was later to discover that none of the informants I recruited from Chinese schools used these online forums.

Finally, I turned to Chinese complementary language schools, which have been used as the primary site for the study of British Chinese children (Francis et al., 2009; W. Li & Zhu, 2010; Mau, 2013). In London, Chinese complementary language schools have come to be seen as harbours of Chinese cultural heritage, attracting Chinese families living in and around London. Educating students aged from 4 to 18, they provide the most convenient and efficient channel to reach the target population. Students attending Chinese schools often come from diverse family backgrounds and live geographically far apart, and so constitute a relatively wide-ranging and dispersed sample of the young British Chinese population. The school setting also provided opportunities to observe their interactions with peers, teachers and parents.

However, there were also limitations arising from choosing Chinese schools as the main research site. The first was that Chinese complementary schools only open once a week for two to four hours. Teachers in Chinese schools are usually volunteers who have full-time jobs during the week. Most pupils and parents are on a tight schedule of weekend activities, so it was difficult for them to take time out to participate in my research. The problem of limited school time was compensated for by an extended amount of time for research in the field. I worked in four schools, firstly as a researcher and then as a Chinese teacher, right through to the data analysis stage. This allowed me to immerse myself in the field for a deeper understanding, gain trust and open up possibilities for follow-up research if needed. Indeed, there was a bright side to my limited observation time in the field: it gave me time to write field notes and reflections, as too much information gathered in a short period of time could lead to information overload and inefficiency.

The second limitation was that the setting of Chinese schools that aim to promote Chinese language and culture may affect the opinions and behaviours of my participants. It was reasonable to infer that those who attended Chinese schools were either themselves, or their families more drawn to Chinese language and culture, although my analysis showed this was not always the case (see detailed analysis in Chapters 6 and 9). During my data collection process this limitation was mitigated by recruiting

participants who were not in Chinese schools. Through personal networks I recruited twelve participants who were not at Chinese school at the time of my research, although all had studied at Chinese schools for a period of time in the past. I interviewed them in their homes and had regular home visits to five British Chinese families. This study hoped to better reveal their multifaceted identities by observing participants in different settings.

Chinese schools were firstly chosen as the main site for research because of the convenience and efficiency for data collection. However as the research progressed I recognised that the role of Chinese schools extended beyond introducing basic knowledge of language or culture, and that these schools also play an important role in shaping the identities and lives of British Chinese young people (see Chapter 9).

### **Access**

Owing to the age of my participants, ethical and successful access meant gaining approval from gatekeepers (including head teachers as main gatekeepers and classroom teachers as sub-gatekeepers), parents and British Chinese children.

I was firstly put in contact with School S by one of my friends, whose daughter was attending School S. With her recommendation, the entry to School S was relatively smooth. But School S only granted me four school visits of two hours each. I was not satisfied with such limited time in the field. More frustratingly, my requests to access two other Chinese schools were declined. The reasons given for these refusals were that they were on a very tight teaching schedule and did not have time for the survey or interviews. One school mentioned that researchers had created trouble for their teaching schedule in the past, so the school committee decided not to accept any more researchers.

I was introduced to the head teacher of School N by Dr. Song, an academic in linguistics and also a teaching consultant in School N. I was accepted to work at School N as a teaching assistant as well as a researcher. Half a year later I was employed to teach the A-Level Chinese class for one year and then

GCSE Chinese class for two years. Once I established my role as a researcher and teacher at one school, it was much easier to approach other Chinese schools. Having secured the recommendation of the head teacher in School N, School E and School W agreed to take me in; School S also granted me more school visits. Section 5.8 provides detailed discussion of the ethical procedure and considerations regarding access.

The process of discovering obstacles to access and overcoming them provided valuable insight into the social organisation of the setting and the people being researched (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). These Chinese schools were rather reserved, cautious and conservative when it came to participating in any research, as previous researchers who had entered the field before me were perceived to have transgressed implicit understandings and thus created obstacles for my research. These factors rendered a personal connection and recommendation more important in order to secure entrance and be seen as a trustworthy researcher. Meanwhile, these schools always need teaching staff owing to their flexible volunteer structure. In order to stay in the field, working as a volunteer teacher was the best way to establish a reciprocal relationship with the gatekeepers. Since the majority of my fieldwork was based in School N while I was teaching, I was aware that a key challenge was to balance my role as both researcher and teacher. The issues of handling priorities in goals, conflicts in conducts and the ethical dilemmas of being a teacher/researcher have been extensively discussed in many studies (Hammersley, 1993; E. D. Wong, 1995; Nolen & Putten, 2007). In this research, to avoid possible bias from my teaching role, I arranged two or more formal visits to each of the three other schools for participant observation. For my in-depth interviews, I also included young people from other Chinese schools and young people from outside the four schools, whom I had not previously met. However, as the following section shows, working as both a teacher and a researcher in the field would inevitably influence my relationships.

### ***Relationships with gatekeepers and participants***

The problem of access was not completely resolved when my initial entry was granted by the school. The main challenge was to establish a good

relationship with both gatekeepers and participants. Classroom teachers were often key informants who possessed knowledge about the research sites and participants. But they were also sub-gatekeepers who controlled access to the specific research environment. All teachers involved in my study were first-generation immigrants from China or Malaysia. Although some were fluent English speakers, they all preferred to talk to me in their mother tongue (Mandarin or Cantonese). My mother tongue is Mandarin and I can understand Cantonese, although I am not fluent in speaking. Trust with teachers was quickly established based on our commonality in our first language, ethnicity, migratory experiences or nationality. Soon they started to refer me as one of them, as I often heard them say, ‘我们中国人... (we Chinese...)' or ‘你是中国人你也知道的... (you are Chinese, you would understand...)'. In general, the teachers in Chinese schools were supportive with regard to organising questionnaire surveys and interviews. However, most of them expressed hesitation and concern when I asked to observe them teaching, even though I had explained that my research objective was not to evaluate teaching. In this sense, my background as a student at the Institute of Education and a teacher in one of the Chinese schools contributed towards my relationships with these teachers and affected their attitudes and reactions towards the research I was proposing to undertake and towards myself as a person.

As Song & Parker (1995) and Ramji (2008) have experienced, sharing similar ethnic background with their East Asian participants is beneficial when approaching and establishing close connections in these communities. In this study, being Chinese indeed made it easier to pass the scrutiny of Chinese school gatekeepers and parents. But it took much more effort for me to connect with British Chinese pupils. There was no longer the convenience of speaking the same mother tongue, which I had with most teachers and parents. Indeed, 27 out of the 29 interviews with British Chinese participants were conducted in English, their dominant language. It also took me a few weeks to fully understand and be able to correctly use teen slang in our conversations. Furthermore, sharing similar cultural knowledge with participants allowed me as a researcher to identify and understand possible layers of meaning in their conversations and utterances. However, the



participants were cautious in their comments because of our common ethnic origin. For example, when I asked participants to outline their impressions of certain Chinese customs, one boy (aged 15) raised his hand and asked me,

Miss, are you patriotic to China? 'cause if you are, I'm not gonna say anything.

(B2-GN)

Having confirmed there would be no judgment from me, he expressed his unhappy feelings about a trip to China. As perceptions of me as a native Chinese and a teacher may have inhibited pupil participants from giving any negative or challenging answers to my questions. Deliberate adjustment of my positioning, either verbal or in action, was required to ensure the collected data reflected participants' real opinions and behaviours. The various roles researchers establish within the field and the perceptions participants have of these roles shape the data that can be collected. The reflexivity of the role of researchers is further discussed in Section 5.7.

### **5.5.2 Participant observation**

Conducting participant observation is a process of learning through involvement in the routine activities of participants in the research setting (Lecompte & Schensul, 2010). It aims to provide an intuitive and intellectual grasp of participants' life experiences; to identify relationships and cultural patterns within different settings; and methodologically to facilitate constant reflections on the collected data throughout the research process.

#### ***Conducting participant observation***

My preliminary participant observations occurred in schools S and N. In phase 1 of the research, I did not participate in any activities and merely observed in as unobtrusive manner as possible. Sitting at the back of classrooms and parents' rooms, I wrote down my observations in as much detail as possible, describing the research settings, drawing up seating plans, tracking sequences of events, counting the number of people and identifying their socio-economic differences from observations and casual conversation. I

tried to document observations in concrete detail without imposing any preconceived theoretical and conceptual frameworks onto the setting and people being studied. Throughout the process I constantly reflected on what I was writing down and why it was important. After the first period of 'take-all' participant observation, observations were directed towards pertinent contextual factors and individual actors and events more specifically related to the research questions. On several occasions, when interesting issues arose from data collected by other methods, I would also examine these issues in real settings.

I carried out participant observation throughout my fieldwork over three and half years but the extent of my participation varied in different situations. I visited schools S, E and W, respectively, more than five times. Participant observation was mainly conducted in the GCSE and A-level classrooms owing to the suitability of pupils' age. I observed two classes in School S, one class in School E and one class in School W. There were eight to twelve pupils in each class. In these three schools, I did not interfere with any ongoing activities during my observation. In School N, working as a teaching assistant in a GCSE class of twelve pupils, I was required to mark pupils' homework, answer their questions and organise after-school cultural activities. I always followed a casual dress code and often chatted with pupils during their break time. They became welcoming and willing to share their confidences with me after several sessions. I continued my participant observation when I was appointed as a teacher of the Chinese A-level class (eight pupils) for one year and the GCSE class for two years (fifteen to twenty pupils). Having fulfilled my teaching responsibility, I frequently encouraged my pupils to express their opinions in classroom discussions, debates and writings when lessons touched upon topics relevant to my research. For example, I asked them to describe their trips to China, to discuss and write about their experiences of being British Chinese young people. My pupils enjoyed the relaxed and lively learning atmosphere. Most of them were enthusiastic about sharing their thoughts. In order to run these casual discussions with minimal interruptions, I decided not to use an audio recording device but jotted down what I observed soon after each session. With the pupils' consent, I also collected some of their writing as data for my

research. Some Chinese schools provided one or two classrooms for parents to stay in while their children were having lessons. Apart from lesson time, my participant observation in Chinese schools also took place in parents' rooms. The parents' rooms, after-class clubs and during the annual school performance.

I conducted participant observations with five British Chinese families. I visited Families A and B once in their homes for my in-depth interviews with parents and children. Each of these visits lasted about three hours. The participant observation in Families A and B were limited to the living/dining room. However, I became friendly with families C, D and E during the research. I was invited to join their family meals on several occasions. When I visited their homes, I often helped the children with their homework, played games with them and helped the parents with housework. Children and parents alike were very comfortable with my presence. Through exploratory observations and open-ended informal interviews I gathered important information in an unfamiliar field, which helped me to identify new themes for the development of my research framework and provided detailed descriptive data that enriched and complemented the data collected by other semi-structured or structured methods.

### ***Field notes***

Taking field notes is one of the best ways of enabling reflexivity (Lecompte & Schensul, 2010). I often took jottings and also voice memo recordings of my observations when writing my observations was not possible. I took photographs of the research settings whenever possible in order to preserve my memories for the process of writing and analysing field notes. Later on the same day or the next day, I transformed these jottings or voice recordings into notes and I dated and entered them into my field note files.

There were in general three categories in my field notes. The first category was based on my observations from within the field of activities, for example, my observation in a Chinese school classroom or in my participants' own bedroom during a home visit. The second kind of field notes was a record of informal interviews or conversations with key informants in the field, such as

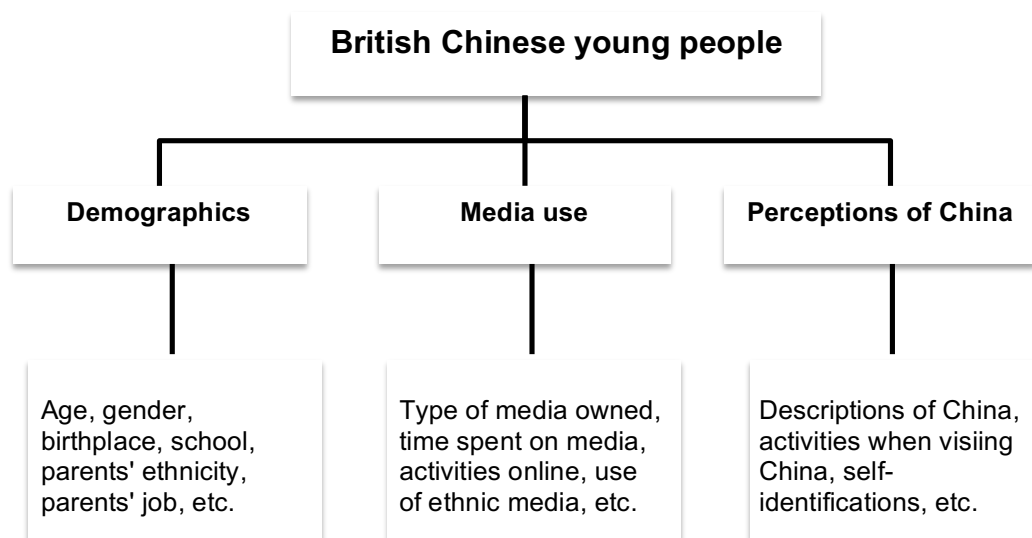
informal chats with schoolteachers or the overheard conversations of pupils. The last category was descriptions of how each research method was carried out in practice in this study. For instance, for every interviewee I wrote down their background information and details of their appearance, my relationship with the interviewee, the venue of the interview, my focus in the interview and my thoughts during and after the interview. I also put comments and thoughts in the margins of these field notes. The constant review of field notes helped me to cross-reference one set of data with another and also encouraged me to make notes about how data might confirm or challenge one another, or how it did or did not fit with my prior theoretical reading.

### **5.5.3 Structured approach: questionnaire survey**

One of the most important advantages of the questionnaire survey in this study was its efficient use of time and resources in gathering background information about the field and the group being researched. The questionnaire survey in this study was designed based on participant observation and two focus group discussions. In turn, the issues that emerged from the questionnaire survey called for further inquiry in the later stage of qualitative data collection and analysis.

#### ***Aims and content***

The questionnaire (see Appendix 3) consisted of three parts. Figure 7 shows how the three themes were first divided into variables and then sub-divided into specific questions. The demographic information gathered under each theme was particularly useful for understanding the background of this group of young people. The media use pattern detected in the survey responses disclosed their relationship with media, which constitutes an important part of their lives. The final section investigated the perceptions British Chinese young people had of China. The variables for measuring the perceptions of China and the Chinese were summarized from participant observation and casual interviews with participants in Phase 1 of the research. Meanwhile, the results collected from this survey paved the way for further exploration with other methods at a later stage.



**Figure 7: Structure of questionnaire design**

### **Sample**

Owing to limited time and resources, I restricted this questionnaire survey to British Chinese pupils aged 13-18 in four Chinese complementary schools. In total I collected 101 valid questionnaires, including 25 from School S with pupil population of 314, 30 from School N with a pupil population of 223, 24 from school W with a pupil population of 189, and 23 from School E with a pupil population of 227. This is a representative sample of the target population – pupils aged 13-18 in London Chinese complementary schools. In this sample, the male and female ratio was 1:2 (34: 67), which reflected the fact that more girls than boys attended London Chinese schools at GCSE and A-level, although I observed that the gender ratio in lower grades is more balanced. More than half of the pupils in GCSE and A-level classes were between 13 (23.8%) and 14 (29.7%) years old. Only a small number of pupils aged between 17 (4%) and 18 (5%) still attended Chinese schools. The age distribution also showed that pupils in Chinese schools tended to be entered for Chinese GCSE or A-level exams at an early age (see further discussion in Chapter 9). 77% of these pupils were living in London and 22.8% were from regions around London such as Kent, Surrey and Essex. Most families showed a commitment to sending their children to Chinese schools because 76% of the pupils reported that they had been studying in Chinese schools for more than five years.

78.2% of the questionnaire survey participants were born in the UK and 92% had spent at least two thirds of their life in the UK (having migrated to the UK before they reached school age). 80.9% of their parents were Chinese (7.9% were from HK), and 15.45% ethnic Chinese from Southeast Asian countries, such as Malaysia and Vietnam. Only 1.55% of their parents were white British. This sample reflected the overall distribution of pupils' family origins in the four Chinese schools.

Among the 101 questionnaire participants, one third (31.4%) were in selective state schools, over one quarter (26.7%) were in private schools, and the majority (41.9%) were in non-selective state schools. The socio-economic background of pupils was measured by asking whether they received free school meals (FSMs) at their British schools. 13.1% of participants received FSMs at the time of research. 78% had at least one sibling. The number of pupils who spoke Cantonese (53) and Mandarin (47) at home was almost equal. 74.3% pupils reported using English at home. Only six pupils reported that they spoke another language at home in addition to Cantonese, Mandarin and English.

### ***Conducting the questionnaire survey***

A pilot questionnaire survey was carried out with five British Chinese young people and relevant adjustment was made in order to ensure the clear wording of questions and an adequate range of responses from each variable. The questionnaire survey was in English, but I also prepared a Chinese version, should any participants request one. According to suitability based on age, the formal questionnaires were distributed in GCSE (four classes) and A-level classes (four classes) in Schools N, S, E and W. Teachers in these eight classes allocated a suitable time slot (often at the end of their lessons), organised the participants and introduced me and my project to the participants. Before the survey started, I always asked the teacher to leave the classroom if possible. If the teachers stayed in the classroom I insisted that they must not give any comments that might affect the answers of their pupils. All the questionnaires were answered anonymously. Since the questionnaire survey was carried out with the supervision of the researcher, it achieved 100% return rate. I distributed 106 questionnaires in total. Five of

the questionnaires were discarded because they were largely incomplete. As I administered the questionnaire survey face-to-face, I was able to answer queries participants may have had and avoid problems stemming from poor reading comprehension and mixed-language abilities.

#### **5.5.4 Semi structured approach 1: focus group discussions**

The advantage of a focus group discussion is its ability to generate a quantity of data in a relatively short period of time from a representative number of people within the target group through interactive conversations and debates. Together with the early phase of participant observations, the first two focus group discussions produced a rich source of exploratory data for understanding the norms, behaviours and opinions of the participants. The latter four focus group discussions were designed to obtain interpretations of some of the issues that emerged from the questionnaire survey and the participatory photography workshop.

#### ***Interview schedule***

Having obtained the assistance of teachers in the Chinese schools, the focus group discussions took place in 45-minute lessons in a classroom setting. The themes of the discussion were focused, but the natural conversational flow would extend beyond the primary focus. The group interview schedule (see Appendix 4) was designed to investigate British Chinese young people's perceptions of 'China and the Chinese', their responses to British media representations of 'China and the Chinese', and their own self-identifications. A variety of sub-questions were drafted under each domain, but questions related to other domains were also prepared as supplementary questions.

#### ***Participants***

I conducted focus group discussions in the GCSE and A-level classes in Schools S, N and W. Table 1 describes the participants in these six groups.

Number of participants	School S		School N		School W	
	GCSE	A-level	GCSE	A-Level	GCSE	A-level
<b>Total</b>	8	6	6	5	6	5
<b>Boys</b>	3	3	3	2	2	2
<b>Girls</b>	5	3	3	3	4	3
<b>Age</b>	13-14	14-15	13-15	17-18	13-16	14-16
<b>Born in Britain</b>	7	5	4	2	4	3
<b>Born in China</b>	1	1	2	3	2	2
<b>Ethnicity: Chinese</b>	7	5	6	4	4	5
<b>Ethnicity: Mixed race</b>	1	1	0	1	2	0

**Table 1: Information on participants in focus group discussions**

The decision about who to recruit for the focus group discussions was based on my participant observation in each class. I tried to keep a balanced representation of gender, age difference, ethnic background and migratory experiences. In A-level classes at School S and School W, there were only five or six pupils in each class. I invited all the pupils in these two classes to focus group discussions, but the availability and willingness of participants determined the actual demographic structure of each group. In all six groups, girls always outnumbered boys because in general there were fewer boys than girls in these classes. I tried to give equal chances for both boys and girls to express their opinions. In addition, corresponding with the sample results from the questionnaire survey, pupils in my samples were generally younger than pupils in GCSE and A-level classes in mainstream schools.

### ***Conducting focus group discussions***

I conducted the first two focus group discussions in School S in Phase 1 of the research and four focus group discussions in Schools N and W at a later stage. One of the most important reasons for choosing Chinese schools as the research site for focus group discussions was the assurance of focus group attendance. Chinese school classrooms provided a comfortable, convenient and familiar setting for both the researcher and the participants. The classrooms, computers and projectors were arranged in advance to facilitate media activities in focus group discussions. The site was inspected



and kept private to ensure participants could express their opinions freely without interruption. It should be recognised that classroom settings may give participants the impression of being assessed as pupils and thus make them hesitant to share their real thoughts. In order to overcome the power relationship between pupils and teachers, at the beginning of each discussion I explained my role as a facilitator not a teacher and the guidelines for group discussions; for example, there was no right or wrong answer, everyone's opinion was equally valued and respected and that everyone needed to participate. Various elicitation techniques were used to stimulate group dialogues and encourage debate, such as the use of video and photographs as prompts, drawing activities, and free-listing words, among others. One of the challenges in practice was managing the flow of discussion. During discussions, some members did not speak; some talked too much or started chatting with people next to them; and some turned disagreements into personal attacks. It required my constant attention to enable pupils to talk, control the pace of discussion and avoid off-topic divergences. To avoid the dominance of one member of the group, it is necessary to deploy other forms of data collection.

#### **5.5.5 Semi-structured approach 2: In-depth interviews**

The advantages of combining in-depth interviews with other data collection methods are that data from one can be used to illuminate another. Long-term participant observation helped me to understand the context and meaning of participants' accounts, rendering analysis of the interviews more credible. Questionnaire survey and focus group discussions provided direction and focus for further interviews and raised possible questions about the rationale for the opinions and behaviours of participants.

#### ***Interview schedule***

The interviews with British Chinese young people were designed to obtain detailed life stories, individual opinions, and accounts of rich experiences from their own perspectives. The interview schedule (see Appendix 5) for young people consisted of questions closely linked to the research questions of this study, such as their demographic information, experiences of being Chinese

pupils in mainstream and Chinese schools, relationship with parents and friends, perceptions of China and the Chinese.

The interviews with parents (see Appendix 6) aimed to provide supplementary information in understanding the dynamic of the parent-children relationship and its influence on the lives and identities of British Chinese young people. The accounts of parents are analysed in comparison with those of their children. Data generated from these interviews are helpful to answer research questions 2 and 3 with regard to parental influence on their children's positioning in schools and for the future.

The interviews with school head teachers (see Appendix 7) provided essential contextual information for understanding the operation of Chinese schools and the people connected to them. Data generated provided useful information in understanding the pupil population, and identified the mission, objectives and characteristics of teaching and the changing attitudes towards Chinese language and culture learning in London's Chinese community.

All interview questions were pre-formulated but the focus and the sequence of questions within each domain were flexible at the discretion of the interviewer and the interviewee. The willingness to be flexible allowed for spontaneous and responsive probing.

### ***Participants***<sup>22</sup>

#### (1) British Chinese young people

In total 29 British Chinese young people (18 girls and 11 boys) participated in the in-depth interviews. They were selected based on previous stages of research to provide a balanced representation of gender, age difference, ethnic background and migratory experiences. All participants were in secondary education, (see Table 14 in Appendix for detailed demographics). The sample consisted of twenty 13- 15-year-old and nine 16-18-year-old young people. All of them lived in the Greater London area. Twenty-nine participants in this sample were from twenty-four families since ten of the participants were sibling pairs. In order to avoid the possible bias that Chinese school settings may have had on the responses of participants, I

recruited and interviewed seventeen of them in the four Chinese schools. The rest were recruited through personal contacts and interviewed at their homes.

Nearly half of my respondents (13) were born in China, and ten moved to the UK before the age of six: the other four settled in Britain before they were nine years old. Yet, the migratory history of the participants was more complex than these numbers suggested. Three of my respondents reported that their families had migrated to other countries (two to France, one to Malaysia) before settling in Britain. Two of those who were born in Britain reported moving back to live with their grandparents in China for a few years.

This study recognizes that the origins and family backgrounds are often an important factor that may shape the opinions and identities of young people. The sampling for the interviews was mainly through professional contacts from the four Chinese schools. Therefore, the selection of participants corresponded with the sample in the questionnaire survey. The majority of the participants (18) had both parents born in the Chinese mainland. Three participants had one parent who was born in Hong Kong. Three participants' parents were ethnic Chinese with Malaysian origins. One participant had one parent who was ethnically Chinese from Vietnam. One participant's biological father was Chinese but he had not seen his father since the age of six. He lived with his Anglo/Irish step-father for more than 10 years. In this sample, three of the young participants had been adopted by white middle class British families. Although these three young people were born in China and their birth parents were all Chinese, they moved to Britain soon after they were born and had never since returned to China. Similar to other factors such as the length of living in Britain, and the socio-economic background, the (birth an adopted) parents' place of origin contributed towards the differences of opinions and identifications among the participants (as discussed in section 6.2.3 and 9.4). The three participants who were adopted by British families showed less knowledge and interest about China/Chinese culture or Chinese parenting. But they were all identified as British Chinese by themselves and others in schools, and committed their Sunday afternoons in the Chinese school for four years.

For the majority (27 out of 29) of the participants, English was their dominant language. The respondents' Chinese language abilities in Cantonese or Mandarin were largely determined by the origin of their parents and the language they used at home. The participants whose parents were from Hong Kong or Guangdong were more fluent in Cantonese. Those whose parents were born in other parts of China mainly spoke in Mandarin even though their parents may have spoken another regional dialect at home.

The majority of my participants experienced their primary and secondary schooling in Britain. Half (16) were in non-selective state schools, nearly one third (9) in selective state schools and only four of them were in private schools. All attended Chinese schools and seventeen of them were still attending Chinese schools at the time of interview. Twenty of them had attended Chinese schools for more than five years.

The participants for the in-depth interviews came from a range of socio-economic family backgrounds. As described in Chapter 2, the catering trade was often found to be the key family background and reference for the lived experiences of British Chinese young people. However, in this sample only three families had connections to the catering trade. Three other families used to be in catering, but later changed to unrelated jobs. According to the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC),<sup>23</sup> of the total number of 44 parents, eleven worked in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (such as scientist, university lecturer, doctor and accountant). Thirteen worked in lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations (such as school teacher, nurse and engineer). Two of the parents were grouped into intermediate occupations (such as administrator, office worker and assistant); six were self-employed; four were in lower supervisory and technical occupations (such as plumber, chef and tailor); seven were homemakers; and one was unemployed.

## (2) Parents

I interviewed eight parents from eight families (six mothers and two fathers). The basic information of these parent participants is shown in Table 2. All these parents were 40-50 years old. Seven were born in China and one was

born in Malaysia. Although all parents spoke their own regional dialects, they were all fluent in Mandarin. They all arrived and settled in Britain around the 1990s and had been living in Britain for at least 13 years. They migrated to Britain for a range of reasons: as international students, professional workers, low-skilled workers and for family reunion. The parents with professional jobs tended to have better proficiency in English and deeper and wider contact with British society than self-employed workers and homemakers.

<b>Parents</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Birth place</b>	<b>Home</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Year of migration to Britain</b>	<b>Place of Interview</b>
<b>Ms. Yu</b>	F	China	Kent	Homemaker	1992	School S
<b>Ms. Lin</b>	F	China	W London	Course developer in a FE college	1997	School N
<b>Mr. Deng</b>	M	China	N London	Secondary school teacher	1987	School N
<b>Ms. Chan</b>	F	China	S London	Market seller	1989	Home
<b>Mr. Xie</b>	M	China	N London	Senior researcher	1999	Home
<b>Ms. Wong</b>	F	Malaysia	Kent	Homemaker	1991	Home
<b>Ms. Li</b>	F	China	N London	University lecturer	1994	Home
<b>Ms. Fan</b>	F	China	S London	Accountant	1997	School W

**Table 2: Demographic information of parents from in-depth interviews**

These interviews with parents were used as background and complementary data in understanding the lives of British Chinese young people. The latter analysis of British Chinese parenting and family lives (see Section 8.2.1 and 8.3.3) were based on the accounts from participant British Chinese young people.

### (3) Chinese school staff

I interviewed four staff from four Chinese schools. The demographic information of the four participants is shown in Table 3. Three of them were involved in the management of their schools. Three had teaching responsibilities. Soon after they migrated to Britain in the 1990s, all four staff started to work in Chinese schools when their children joined the school. They all stayed and intended to continue working in the Chinese schools after their children had graduated. They were all university-educated professionals working full-time in other jobs. Only one of them had formal training relevant to teaching Chinese (Ms. Fan is a university lecturer in Chinese literature in China). None of them had qualifications for teaching Chinese to children. They reflected a common dilemma of fulfilling a passion for teaching Chinese despite a deficiency in training among Chinese schoolteachers, something I have written about elsewhere (D. Wang, 2014).

Staff	Birthplace	School	Occupation	Job at Chinese school	Time in School
Ms. Fan	China	W	Accountant	Year 2 teacher	15 years
Mr. Lei	HK China	E	Engineer	School Governor	8 years
Ms. Lin	China	N	Course developer in an FE college	Deputy Headmistress Year 1 teacher	14 years
Mr. Ng	HK China	S	Scientific researcher	Chairman Martial arts teacher	15 years

**Table 3: Demographic information of four school staff interviewees**

### ***Conducting in-depth interviews***

A pilot study was conducted with one British Chinese family (two children and one parent) in order to test the questions and the length of the interview. From the pilot interviews with young people, I learnt that firstly using prompts such as examples, pictures or providing imagined scenarios was an engaging and efficient way to prompt answers. Then, when I moved on to more abstract discussions about identities, the respondents were much more willing to discuss their opinions. I also learnt to keep my questions concise in the

interviews with parents in order to help respondents focus on the interview schedule.

Prior to the interviews with young people, I had already established rapport with the young British Chinese either through participant observation or personal connections. By observing their activities in lessons and during break time and talking to teachers and parents, I tried to learn more about my participants before I approached them individually. The information gathered beforehand was extremely useful in developing tailored strategies and eliciting personalized information during the in-depth interviews with these young people.

All of the British Chinese children chose to be interviewed in their first language: twenty-five interviews were in English and three in Chinese. Using the language they were most familiar with helped young children to relax during the interview and express their opinions more freely. But respondents would often switch among Mandarin, Cantonese and English. The interview environment is another factor that influences the atmosphere and pace of the interview. I conducted twelve interviews with British Chinese young people at their homes and seventeen in a quiet and private classroom at Chinese schools. The young people whom I interviewed at home were more relaxed but also easily distracted. Interviews at home allowed me to observe their real living environments, their personality and hobbies through displays and materials in their rooms. The young people whom I interviewed at Chinese schools often positioned themselves as pupils and me as a teacher. It normally took longer for them to ease into a relaxed conversation. The length of interviews with British Chinese young people ranged from 30 to 60 minutes.

Interviews with parents and Chinese schoolteachers were all conducted in Mandarin although they sometimes switch languages between Mandarin, Cantonese and English. Five of the interviews with parents were conducted at their homes and four were in a quiet and private classroom at Chinese schools. All the interviews with parents lasted around 90 minutes. All the

interviews with teachers in Chinese schools were conducted in quiet and private classrooms and lasted approximately one hour.

#### **5.5.6 Participatory photography workshop**

Early social researchers often took the scientific-realist stance towards visual data, which views photography as an objective recording device (Pink, 2007). In the 1990s, new literature on photography in social science (Chaplin, 1994; Harper, 2003) showed a departure from a scientific-realist paradigm. Authors like Sara Pink (2007) and Banks (2001) argue that words and photographs are not objective reality but constructed narratives; researchers with a reflexive approach to visual data suggest regarding the image as an equally meaningful element of social science research. A more recent development in visual research is the participatory approach, which attempts to foster collaborative production between researchers and informants in terms of engaging participants to depict their experiences and express their opinions in visual forms. The use of this method also attempts to explore identity in representations, because as discussed in Chapter 3, there is no understanding of identity outside of culture and representation (Hall, 1990).

Originate from Paulo Freire's (1970) model of empowerment and feminist epistemology and methodologies, participatory visual approaches emphasise that photography can help marginalized groups reflect on their own lived experiences and stimulate critical narratives for social problems and policy change (C. Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001; C. Wang & Pies, 2008).

Researchers who seek to understand children's lives and experiences are often challenged by the gap between age, verbal skills and power relations between themselves and their respondents. As an attempt to bridge the social and communication gaps, participatory visual research has been increasingly used in education research. In these studies, participants operate the cameras and create representations, such as photographs, videos and drawings, to describe their own experiences and express their own opinions. For example, de Block and Buckingham (2007) used video production as their main method to explore the perspectives and experiences of immigrant children. Jorgenson and Sullivan (2010) organised photography workshops to explore children's experiences with household technology.



Many studies suggest that participatory photography benefits researchers and participants alike. It assists researchers in their ability to provoke different responses among participants (Ortega-Alcázar & Dyck, 2012); it helps participants put abstract discussion into a real and relatable context and gain new perspectives (Kolb, 2008); and it shifts the balance of power between the researcher and the researched (C. Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the potential challenges and limitations of the method. Researchers may intentionally or unintentionally influence the photographs produced through the direction they provide to participants (C. Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Participatory photography can have unintended consequences such as generating suspicion and embarrassment for participants (Prins, 2010). Moreover there are ethical considerations including the provision of culturally appropriate ethical guidelines for photography practice (Yefimova, Neils, et al., 2014), issues of privacy and consent throughout the photography practice (C. Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001) and the contradictory potential for social control and surveillance over marginalized groups (Prins, 2010). The ethical considerations around this method are discussed in Section 5.8.

### ***Aims and Content***

The reasons for employing participatory photography method lie in concerns that emerged at an early phase of this study. During group or individual interviews, young participants often tended to provide an easy way-out answer ('I don't know') when asked difficult questions, such as to elaborate their thoughts, or explain the reasons for a comment or action. It could be because of their lack of verbal skills and ability to organise thoughts, as well as feeling intimidated by a researcher's persistent and probing questions. Furthermore, I was aware that this study required gaining access to the private lives of participants, who do not open themselves up to outsiders. Even with home visits, the parents in the household to a large extent controlled the research setting. In this case, photographs generated by participants offered advantages in that they had the potential to capture "a degree of tangible detail [and] a sense of being there" (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998, p. 116), which could otherwise be considered trivial and therefore easily

forgotten in their daily lives. As a record of their activities in the private sphere, these photographs provided representation of their lived experiences.

More importantly, the use of task-orientated participatory photography aimed to elicit critical narratives, perceptions and representations from these young people. This project involved photography sessions and hands-on practice in the use of cameras; participants' independent photography research tasks around the central theme of 'China and the Chinese through my eyes'; and collaborative photo collections, interpretations and display. I kept a reflexive account during the workshop in order to constantly review the direction and progress of the workshop.

### ***Participants***

There were in total eight pupils participating in this workshop. The demographic information of the participants (six girls and two boys) is listed in Table 4.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Birthplace</b>	<b>Parents' birthplace</b>	<b>Years in Britain</b>	<b>Trips to China (times)</b>
<b>Kuan Tang</b>	M	17	Britain	China	17	4
<b>Sophia Zhu</b>	F	15	China	China	15	4
<b>Yunke Xia</b>	F	14	China	China	10	5
<b>Lanke Sun</b>	F	13	Britain	China	13	3
<b>Johanna Deng</b>	F	14	Britain	China	14	5
<b>Ming Su</b>	M	14	Britain	China	14	7
<b>Denise Xiong</b>	F	13	Britain	China	13	5
<b>Lu Shi</b>	F	13	China	China	10	4

**Table 4: Demographic information of participants in the participatory photography workshop**

Three of the participants were born in China and the other five were born in Britain. The participants were aged 13-16 and all of them had lived in Britain for more than ten years. They had all paid three or more visits to China. All participants had basic knowledge and practice of using digital cameras to

take photographs before they joined the course. All participants were able to bring their own digital cameras to the workshop.

### ***Conducting participatory photography workshop***

This participatory photography workshop was carried out in partnership with School N. The benefit of this partnership for this study was that it facilitated the recruitment of participants. The partnership was also beneficial to School N as it attracted new pupils, opened a new after-school club and generated more income. As the workshop leader, I had formal news photography training from my Bachelor degree in Journalism, but I had never taught photography before I started this workshop. Thus, this workshop was proposed as a three-month research project, not a teaching course. I clarified my position as a workshop leader and facilitator rather than a professional photography teacher when recruiting participants.

This project was divided into three stages. The first stage consisted of photography teaching sessions, which focused on equipping participants with relevant knowledge, skills and ethical guidelines for taking photographs. We had ten one-hour sessions covering topics related to the skills, ethics and practice of photography (see Appendix for the course plan). A typical session consisted of 25 minutes for lecturing and 35 minutes for hands-on, task-orientated photography practice (see Figures 8 and 9). Several photograph-selecting tasks at this stage were set to explore some of the research questions, such as finding photos to visually represent China/Chinese and Britain/British. The photographs chosen by participants were collected and discussed in class in subsequent sessions.

In the second stage of this workshop, over their summer holidays participants were encouraged to plan, organise and complete their photography project on the theme of 'China/Chinese through my eyes'. Six of the participants joined a summer camp trip to China. Their project was mainly about using cameras to record their experiences in China. The other two participants, who did not join the summer camp, focused on taking photographs that they felt were representative of 'China and the Chinese' in Britain.



**Figure 8: Participants learning to take photographs.**  
**One pupil was modelling for the others**



**Figure 9: Participants explore new ways of using cameras.**  
**They called it 'photos in photos in photos...'**

The third stage was a collaborative process between the researcher and participants in editing, selecting and discussing the subjective meanings of photographs taken by participants. It was conducted in a classroom where all the digital photographs were saved on a computer and presented on a projector. The main purpose of the discussion was to understand the content of the photographs and how they were taken. More specific questions included when and where the photographs were taken and the significance they held for each participant. It was not a structured interview but a free and natural conversation, allowing participants to reflect upon and assign their own relevancies to the photographs they took. After the interview, we worked together to select and edit photographs for the final photographic exhibition. Participants were asked to choose ten to fifteen of their own photographs, specify the time and place the photograph was taken, add a title and caption for each photograph and put selected digital photographs into a photomontage for a final exhibition. All participants were aware that their photos would be displayed on the open day of School N with parents, teachers and other pupils as the main audience. On the day of the exhibition, all photographs were colour printed on A4 paper and displayed in the corridor of the school's main building. The digital copies of the photographs were shown on PowerPoint and accompanied by background music chosen by participants. These digital photomontages were set up to play on a cycle via a projector in the parents' waiting room during the exhibition day.

The participatory photography workshop in this study was designed to break down the power imbalance between adult researchers and young participants and create a space for participants to take control of the agenda. The task-orientated participatory activities provided motivation and time for participants to learn skills, plan the project, create their own representations and talk about their decision-making process. The participatory photography workshop was generally successful with the participants who went to summer camp in China. Taking photographs helped them to record the details of events they experienced, which may have potentially been forgotten in later interviews. Discussing these photographs helped the participants to reflect on the motives, emotions and interpretations of their own visual representations and furthermore the meanings of their experiences in China. However, the results

generated by the two participants who stayed in Britain were relatively less satisfactory. As they did not travel to China, they took photographs based on convenience rather than planning. For example, most of their photographs were taken inside their houses with subjects such as Chinese furniture, artefacts and paintings. Their interpretations of these photographs were largely limited to their face value. Therefore, the use of the participatory photography workshop in the research of young people may not always be illuminating or empowering. The successful completion of participatory photography workshop depends on the individuals involved, the quality of facilitation, the context in which they are applied and also the researchers' careful planning, close monitoring and constant reflections. Chapter 6 further discusses the application and results of this method.

## **5.6 Data Analysis**

All field notes and related hand-written materials were initially labelled and stored in a large file box. Later, these hand-written materials were scanned and stored digitally. All the questionnaires collected were numbered, checked and entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software as soon as they were completed. The paper questionnaires were stored in a folder in a safe place. A separate document was created to describe in detail each of the variables and scales. The final data set, together with the analysis reports, were saved in a password-protected file. All audio recordings for the interviews were transcribed as soon as the interviews were completed. All the textual, visual and audio data were stored in an external hard drive and also on an online storage website, both of which were password protected. All these files were carefully labelled, described and organised using Nvivo software so that later in the analysis stage they could be cross-referenced by date, location, topic and person involved, among other variables.

### **5.6.1 Questionnaire survey data analysis**

The analysis of the quantitative data generated from the questionnaire survey involved two stages. The first stage of the analysis was to use SPSS software to generate a descriptive summary for each variable, such as frequency, means and range. The second stage examined the relationships among different variables generated from the first stage. Bivariate and multivariate

analyses were used to examine the associations of two and more variables. Detailed analysis of the quantitative data will be presented in Chapter 7.

In order to ensure the reliability of the quantitative data collected, the data were analysed in comparison with the relevant quantitative reports from other sources. Some of the results from the questionnaire survey were also tested by other qualitative methods in order to ensure their validity. For example, all interviewees were asked to comment on some of the results from the questionnaire survey. This process of data triangulation aims to put quantitative data into context, generate enriched explanations and accounts, and hopefully leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the results.

### **5.6.2 Qualitative text data analysis**

In this study, qualitative text data analysis included three steps: organising data, reducing data through summarization and categorization, and identifying linking patterns and themes. The qualitative text data in this study included field notes and transcripts of group and individual interviews.

All data were entered into the computer-assisted qualitative analysis programme Nvivo for coding and analysis. After the first round coding, a coding system was developed to reflect the major questions and interest in the research. The coding system began with domains that were based on core categories of questions developed in interviews and observations. Then, the coding system was elaborated to form factors, sub factors and associated codes based on the content of the text data. These codes were grouped into themes, which were further divided, developed and integrated into the process of data analysis. The codes and themes were not predetermined but evolved in the process of moving back and forth between data and concepts, between description and interpretation, using both inductive and deductive reasoning. Table 5 shows the exploration of different variables to measure the factor 'purposes for attending Chinese schools', in the domain of Chinese school experiences.

Variables	Extract from Transcript	Themes
Social interaction	I like coming to Chinese schools because I can <b>see my friends</b> . That's the only place I can meet them. (Johanna)	Chinese school as a space for social interactions
Parents' decision	'cause I'm taking my <b>GCSE Chinese</b> this year, and my Mum <b>forced</b> me. (Emily)	Pupils' attitudes to learn Chinese in Chinese schools: reluctance and acceptance
	My parents made me come to Chinese school... But now I <b>quite like</b> it. (Gang)	
To learn language skills	To improve my Chinese because I'm a <b>Chinese person</b> , it is <b>only correct</b> I <b>should</b> know my mother language. (Rachel)	Pupils' attitudes to learning Chinese in Chinese schools: <b>a.</b> Language as an identity marker <b>b.</b> Language as cultural and social capital <b>c.</b> Learn Chinese literacy as fluent speakers
	It is useful for finding <b>jobs</b> in the future (Kenny)	
	'cause within our home, yeah, you <b>can only learn how to speak</b> (Chinese)... but we still come to the Chinese school, because <b>we need to learn how to read and write stuff</b> . (Namjyu)	
Transnational connections	Because the school organises <b>summer camps in China</b> . (B2-GN)	Chinese schools as a nexus of transnational activities for young pupils.
	I think it's the place you <b>socialize</b> with Chinese people and <b>learn about your roots</b> . (Zhengyi)	Chinese schools as institutions for transmitting knowledge about China

Table 5: Example of coding system: Purposes for attending Chinese schools



After several rounds of thematic analysis of different themes and relationships between themes, this study also attempted to identify and analyse various discourses emerging from the respondents' accounts. Thus when appropriate, this study also involved a Foucauldian or post-structural approach to discourse analysis (Foucault, 1980; Hall, 2001). This is concerned with the ways in which discourse produces contested meanings and effects in the real world (Carabine, 2001). For Foucault, discourses are constitutive in the sense that they have power outcomes that define and construct 'truth' and 'norm' at particular moments. The purpose of Foucauldian discourse analysis is to examine how the historically and culturally situated system of power/knowledge creates social meanings and constructs subjects and their world through discourses. This study used this approach to analyse the social meanings created by discourses and the inter-relationship between discourses, such as the meaning of to participants being 'British Chinese'. This study also examined how these discourses discursively constructed the identities of British Chinese young people, such as pupils' multi-layered interpretations, and the flexible utilization of these discourses in specific contexts.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the theoretical framework of this study is informed by Bourdieu's theories. Therefore this study also employs a Bourdieuan analytical approach to understanding the schooling experiences of British Chinese young people in both mainstream and Chinese schools. This approach helps this study to examine the mechanism of 'habitus' in different fields with the complex interplays of different power relations. This study further discussed the adaptation and possible alterations of using the concept of 'habitus' to understand the prevalent discourses of 'valuing education' and being 'well-behaved' in British Chinese communities (see Chapter 8).

### **5.6.3 Visual data analysis**

This study adopted the reflexive approach of analysing visual data. This approach does not stay with researcher's interpretations of visual content, but also examines how visual content is informed by the subjectivities and intentions of the individuals involved; and what meanings different individuals give to those images in different contexts (Pink, 2007). It needs to be aware

that visual or 'creative' methods do not naturally provide more accurate or authentic representations of individual 'beliefs' or 'attitudes'. Rather, as Buckingham (2009, p. 229) pointed out, researchers need to be even more reflexive about 'how research itself establishes positions from which it becomes possible for participants to "speak"'.

This study maintains the stance that pictures cannot be analysed in isolation of any wider frame of reference and contexts. The image-making of participants was shaped by factors such as their skill levels, the conventions of pictorial representation and also their interpretations of the research tasks. Therefore, the visual data were analysed together with the participants' own accounts of the purposes, processes and interpretations of their own visual creations. All useable photographs were numbered so that they could be linked to the corresponding verbal explanations. Furthermore, these young people's visual presentations and interpretations were analysed and triangulated with data generated from interviews about their interpretations of the images of 'China and the Chinese' in mainstream media. From the comparison of dominant and subversive visual representations and interpretations, the contested meanings of 'China/Chinese', 'Britain/British' came to the foreground. By triangulating back and forth between visual data, verbal data and observational field notes, it was possible to extract meanings from different commentaries and develop themes for further analysis.

### **5.7 Reflexivity: negotiating the researcher's roles**

Reflexivity of the researcher was another defining feature of this research design. It is often argued that reflexivity can reveal those who are neglected (Hertz, 1997), unmask hidden political/ideological agenda (Richardson, 2000), achieve ethical mindfulness (Warin, 2011), and enhance the transparency and accountability of the research (Finlay, 2002). However, reflexivity is not the panacea that guarantees validity and credibility in social research. There are rising concerns about the ambiguous and complex process of reflectivity (Adkins, 2002; Haney, 2002). These challenges are inherent to the task that requires researchers to explore the reflexive potential of their research based on their aims, methodological design and specific circumstances.

Section 5.5.1 shows that my multiple identifications as a Chinese citizen, a postgraduate student, a female in her late twenties, a Chinese teacher, and a researcher created both opportunities and challenges in interacting with participants and gatekeepers. These identifications continued to shape my decision and interests in research and influenced my emphases in my analysis. Several incidents during my fieldwork highlighted the challenges of my multiple roles in the field. Below I discuss two examples that reveal the strong emotions and even tensions I experienced in my fieldwork as a result of my multiple identities and their impact on the data collection and analysis.

The first incident took place in the last session of the participatory photography workshop in School N. The task of the session was to have a discussion with every pupil and select some of his/her photographs for the final exhibition.

Just before the lesson, my pupil Kuan (boy, aged 17) told me he had left his photographs at home but luckily he could download them from his Facebook album. Normally pupils are not allowed to use the computer in the classroom, but this time I gave him permission to use the computer to download his photographs. Kuan's mum, the head teacher, walked past the classroom and saw Kuan surfing on the Internet. She walked in and asked him why he was on Facebook in lesson time. He explained that he was trying to get photographs for the workshop. Then she asked him why he hadn't prepared the photographs the night before. He replied something quietly, I didn't hear exactly what he said, but it obviously upset his Mum. She suddenly slapped him on the face in front of the other six students and me. Everyone went quiet and looked at the mother and son. Then the mother said, '我警告过你不准回嘴 (I've warned you not to talk back).' Then she turned around and walked out of the classroom. Kuan seemed very upset but he just kept himself busy on the computer as if nothing had happened.

Extract from field note No. 27, School N

In this incident, I was put in a dilemma owing to my roles as a researcher, a teacher and a native Chinese. In theory, as a participant observer, I should not interfere with the events in the field unless the safety of the participants is threatened. In this case, I chose not to interfere because a slap from a mother to her 16-year-old son is not considered life-threatening. But at the same time I was a teacher in that class. It should be my responsibility to control how parents discipline their children in my classroom in front of other pupils. However, my workshop and research were facilitated and supported by the gatekeeper, the head teacher, also the boy's mother. When my current and future research relied upon her support, should I confront her about the way she disciplined her own child? Furthermore, having grown up in China, I understand that traditional Chinese parenting mostly emphasises the disciplinary element. Many Chinese who have adopted this kind of parenting philosophy would see incidents similar to this one as normal. As I was once a Chinese child, I understood the perspective of Kuan's mother but I also empathized with Kuan's embarrassment. Each of my multiple roles attached by different sets of power relationship in the field, required varied and sometimes contradictory commitments and responsibilities. Such tension involved in juggling the different roles of researchers can only be resolved when one role overrides the others (Jarvie, 1969). In this case, the role of researcher overrode the teachers' role. My cultural background helped me to understand and interpret the interactions between Chinese parents and children. But in the end, my feeling of guilt as a teacher and a friend to Kuan was still hard to relieve.

The second example shows that reflexivity continued to play an important role in the data analysis stage. This incident took place when I had just started my fieldwork at School N. I joined a group of pupils at lunchtime and had a casual chat with them about their perceptions of China.

I asked the pupils to describe their impressions of China. They quickly came up with the following phrases: crowded; disgusting toilets; cheap labour; One Child Policy; corrupted government; respect for teachers; pollution, hard-working, fast development,

etc. I must admit that it was very awkward for me when I heard how they described my homeland, China. It is true that China has social and environmental problems. But I've always been taught to accept or downplay these problems... China is *my* homeland and I don't like the feeling of being ashamed of where I come from. They talked about China like a distant place where they have no attachment. But at the same time they gave their judgments so confidently as if they were insiders of China. I think their perceptions of China were superficial.

Extract from the field note No. 6, School N

This field note was recorded shortly after the discussion. Clearly I was very emotional after hearing their descriptions of China. At that time, as an observer, I resisted the temptation of 'correcting' their comments or arguing what I truly thought. But as a Chinese, I could not help feeling disappointed and offended when my homeland was being criticized. It was not until a few months later when I read my notes again I realized that my accounts and interpretations of the event at that time were biased. This incident reminds me that I need to be consistently cautious of the presumptive 'insider' status in the target population just because of our shared ethnic origin. When I unconsciously assumed we all shared similar thoughts, their descriptions of China came as a surprise to me. Additionally, influenced by my emotions, my interpretation, such as in, 'their perceptions were superficial', was invalid. Indeed, my ethnic background and personal values influenced my judgment and interpretations of the data. There were many possible readings of the data, and as the researcher I had the power to select what data to use and how to interpret them. Therefore, it was extremely important to constantly interrogate my fluid and multiple identities as the researcher in the research settings and maintain a critical distance from data in analysis. More specifically, I constantly review in my field notes what was learned, how it was learned, and what social discourses informed the production of such knowledge throughout the research process. Only in this way would thorough and rigorous analysis that represented the 'truer' opinions and experiences of the participants emerge.

## **5.8 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations permeated the entire research process, especially as the main research participants were young people. In advance of the fieldwork, ethical approval from the university was required to ensure relevant ethical issues were considered and addressed thoroughly.

### **5.8.1 Informed consent**

To achieve informed consent with children in school settings required permission from all three parties involved: schools, parents/guardians and young people. During the initial recruitment, I sent formal recruitment letters to Chinese schools, together with three information leaflets written for the Chinese schools, parents and young people (see appendices 8, 9 and 10), which explained what the project was and how they would be involved. The head teachers of the schools who agreed to take part in the study were asked to sign the research consent forms (see Appendix 11). Two or three weeks before I started my fieldwork at school, the schools were required to notify all parents and pupils about this project via email as well as circulating the research information leaflets. The voluntary nature of participation was properly explained to everyone involved in the project. Chinese versions of the information sheet and consent form were provided for participants who prefer to read and write in Chinese. To recruit participants for in-depth interviews and participatory workshop, I handed out a recruitment letter and an information leaflet (see Appendix 9 and 10) in person to all the young participants and their parents, in which I explained the aims and procedures of this project. Informed consent was actively sought and obtained from all participants. For young children under the age of 16, consent from the guardians/parents was also obtained.

### **5.8.2 Confidentiality**

Participants in in-depth interviews and the participatory photography workshop were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. English, Cantonese and Mandarin phonetic systems were used to reflect the original sounds of the names that participants preferred to use. Specific four digit code names were assigned to participants in the focus group discussion. The first letter (B or G) stands for the gender (boy or girl) of the participants; the second digit is a

number that was attached to each participant in his/her gender group; the third letter (G or A) stands for the classes (GCSE or A-level) of the participant; the last letter (N, S or E) stands for the school the participant attended. For example, 'G3-GN' means Girl 3 in GCSE class of School N.

All participants were given an opportunity upon request to review a draft report of the study to ensure their confidence in the way their confidentiality has been maintained. The opinions and work of young people would not be discussed with their parents or teachers. If parents or teachers insisted on knowing or seeing the content of students' opinions and work, I prioritised the teenagers' wishes. Photographs used for analysis in this study were chosen to meet certain criteria: any recognisable faces of young people under 18 in the photographs were pixelated without altering the photographic meaning. However, it is important to recognise that complete anonymity in published participant-produced visual images is somewhat impossible (Allen, 2012). Therefore, all participants were explicitly told the potential risks before they gave their consent for me to use their photographs. All data collected in the paper were kept in a locked cupboard at my home. The electronic data will be kept on a password-protected computer that does not leave my house. After the completion of the study, the digital recordings will be wiped clean. I will keep hard copies of the data in a locked cupboard for up to seven years.

### **5.8.3 Risks**

A series of measures were taken to minimize the potential risks in the research, especially when working with young people. I provided my Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to schools and parents before I began my research. I was aware that it was my responsibility to report to relevant organisations if I found anything that may harm the young people involved in my research. Personal safety and ethical behaviours were considered especially important for participants in the participatory photography workshop. In order to protect participants during the photography process, specific instructions were printed and given to each of the participants before they set out to take photographs. They were instructed not to take photographs that might make people uncomfortable or

embarrassed, not to take photographs that might get them into trouble, and not to take photographs of the faces of strangers without asking permission.

I was aware that the interviews, photograph selections and photograph exhibition may put the students at risk of distress, embarrassment and/or anxiety (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research, refuse to answer questions with which they were uncomfortable, and delete any pictures they preferred not to share in the study or exhibition. I set a date by which participants would withdraw their data. A period of three months after the data had been collected was deemed sufficient for informants to reflect on their contribution (Prins, 2010). After that, data had become an integral part of the thesis and it would not be possible to remove them.

Another kind of risk is potential bias and misinterpretation embedded in the research process. The personal judgement of the researchers may intervene at many different levels of respondents' verbal and visual representations (C. Wang & Burris, 1994). To minimize such risks, all research methods except the photography workshop were always carefully tested and evaluated with a pilot group. A reflexive account was kept throughout in order to review possible prejudices and bias in my research. As some interviews were conducted in Chinese, interviewees or a third person whom they trusted were given opportunities to check whether their accounts were faithfully translated.

Findings from this research were presented and discussed with experienced researchers in the same field in several seminars and academic conferences. Some findings in this study were written into three academic papers published in peer-reviewed journals. The challenges and suggestions provided by other researchers inside and outside the research field assisted with the analysis, writing and dissemination of the findings.

## **5.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the research questions and provided rationale for the research design, described the procedures of the different methods employed in the process of data collection and data analysis, and assessed



the ethical considerations of research. This chapter emphasised the researchers' reflexivity and data triangulation to achieve valid and reliable data analysis and presentation. The results generated from this research design and relevant issues highlighted in this chapter will be discussed in chapters 6 to 10.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Perceptions and Representations: Imagining China and the Chinese**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter addresses the first research question, investigating the contested understandings of 'China and the Chinese' produced by British Chinese young people; and how these perceptions and representations reflect and shape their positioning between familial ethnic and cultural origins and current place of residence. This study recognises the complexity of the migration history of British Chinese families and that not every British Chinese young person identifies China or the Chinese state (PRC) as being congruent with their sense of ethnicity. Nevertheless, almost all participants (97 out of 101 in the questionnaire survey, 28 out of 29 in interviews) identified themselves as British Chinese or Chinese. The process of making sense of the meanings of 'China and the Chinese' reveals their family migratory histories, experiences of living in Britain, and cultural identifications entangled with changing media discourses.

This chapter begins by investigating how British Chinese young people describe 'China' in their own words. Then, it triangulates the quantitative analysis of their opinions on these descriptions with rich and varied accounts from qualitative interviews. The second section specifically examines responses of British Chinese young people towards a BBC-produced documentary about the recent economic growth of China. Furthermore, this chapter reflects methodologically on the use of participatory photographic workshops; and analyses the production, representations and corresponding interpretations of 'China and the Chinese' in visual forms. It compares and interrogates data collected by different methods in different settings in order to make sense of participants' changing and varying accounts of 'China and the Chinese'; and further detects their self-identifications and sense of belonging.

## **6.2 Descriptions of 'China and the Chinese'**

In the early stages of my fieldwork, I asked several respondents to use a few words to describe 'China and the Chinese' both informally and in two preliminary focus group discussions. Interestingly, the words and phrases they used were almost identical. Based on the findings, I included a question in the questionnaire survey to gather opinions on the descriptions of 'China and the Chinese' most often referred to by respondents in the preliminary research. These fell into four categories: environmental descriptions (including 'crowded', 'noisy', 'polluted', 'beautiful landscape' and 'dirty'); economic descriptions (including 'fast development' and 'cheap labour'); socio-cultural descriptions (including 'delicious food', 'interesting history', 'exciting' and 'too many rules'); and political descriptions ('corrupt government'). Some were factual descriptions, such as 'crowded', 'fast development' and 'polluted', but others were subjective evaluations such as 'exciting', 'delicious food' and 'too many rules'. In the individual and group interviews, interviewees were also asked to describe 'China and the Chinese' and then comment on the results of the questionnaire survey.

The vast majority of participants in this questionnaire survey (85.1%) had visited China (including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) at least once. Nearly half (43.5%) had visited China more than five times (for details see Table 15 in Appendix). Among various activities during their visits to China, seeing and/or staying with family were the most common (chosen by 72 out of 101 participants), followed by sightseeing (chosen by 33 out of 101 participants) and shopping (chosen by 26 out of 101 participants). Given the varied extent of experiences in China, these participants showed a consensus on the majority of descriptions of 'China and the Chinese'. As Figure 10 shows (for more detailed data see Table 16 in Appendix), for the first ten descriptions, only a small number (ranging from 0 to 11%) disagreed with these descriptions. Although only one third of the survey respondents agreed with the last two descriptions ('Too many rules' and 'Corrupt'), less than one fifth (14% and 18%) disagreed with the two descriptions, while more than half maintained a neutral stance. By cross-tabulation with different nominal variables, there was no significant correlation found between the patterns of opinions and factors such as birthplace, gender, age, nationalities, and

exposure to Chinese ethnic media. Participants who had no or few visits to China were more likely to take a neutral position towards descriptions with negative connotations, such as ‘polluted’, ‘dirty’ and ‘corrupt government’. The rest of this section analyses each category of descriptions together with qualitative accounts gathered from the individual and group interviews.

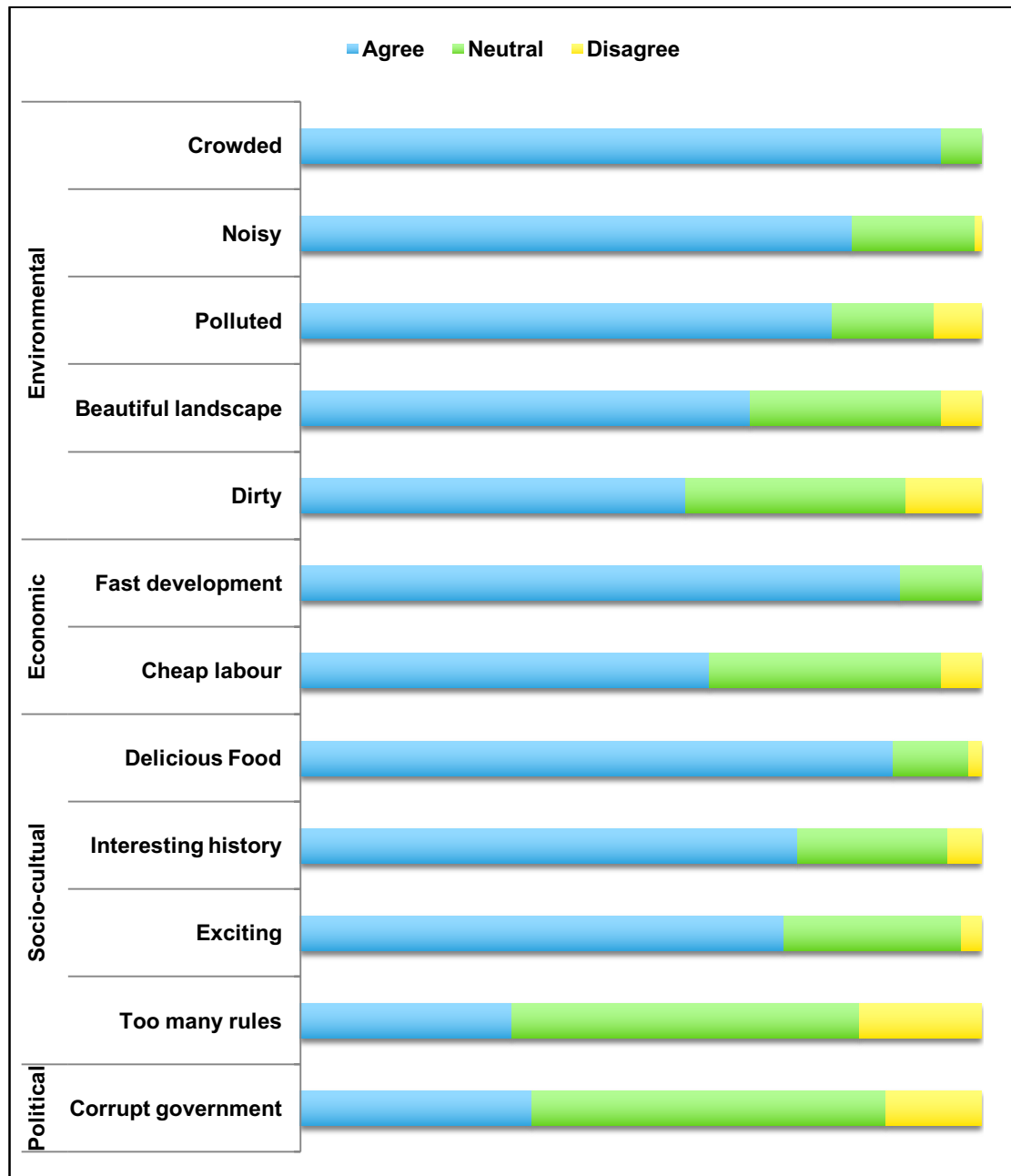


Figure 10: British Chinese young people’s opinions about descriptions of China in the questionnaire survey (N=101)

### 6.2.1 Environmental descriptions

In the questionnaire survey, the description of 'crowded' gained the most votes (94%). While 'noisy' (81%) and 'polluted' (78%) showed a high rate of agreement, about one third of the respondents were neutral to the descriptions of 'beautiful landscape' (28%) and 'dirty' (32%).

In the individual and group interviews, many respondents relied on their own experiences in China as their primary source to support their opinions on these environmental descriptions.

我们那块儿你穿上白鞋在街上走一天就全黑了, 而且耳朵里会全是沙子。

In our place, your white shoes would turn completely black after walking on the street for one day, and your ears would be filled with sand.

(Ying, girl, aged 18; hometown Hohhot, capital of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region in north China)

I would never get on a bus in China, because it's always crowded and people don't queue.

(Jake, aged 16)

Sometimes the seemingly negative descriptions of 'crowded' and 'noisy' were interpreted as 'lively', 'colourful' and 'really convenient' (Gang, boy, aged 16).

Yunke: China is busy, **colourful**, because I've only been to Beijing and Shanghai. It's all cities.

Interviewer: What do you mean by colourful?

Yunke: Like bright lights. Because usually at night-time, when you go to England and stuff, all the shops are closed, but when you go to China, like, everything is awake.

(Yunke, girl, aged 14)

Although, at the time of research, almost all my interviewees were living in London, one of the busiest cities in the world, many still felt impressed by the liveliness of Chinese cities. The destinations of their trips to China, either with families or via summer camps, were mostly major Chinese cities. Even interviewees whose families were originally from villages focused their accounts on their experiences in cities rather than rural areas. When they stayed with families in Chinese villages, most of their activities were visiting relatives and friends' houses, having meals, watching TV or playing games with children of their age. As Josie (aged 15) described,

Actually it was very boring. When my father visited his friends I got to play with their children. Sometimes we just sat there for a whole afternoon but had nothing to talk about.

Comparatively, these young people were more excited about shopping with their cousins and friends in the nearest towns or cities. The fact that their most memorable experiences in China were concentrated in cities could explain why most agreed with descriptions of China such as 'polluted', 'crowded' and 'noisy'. It could also explain why they held a relatively more neutral attitude towards the descriptions of 'dirty'. As Jake said, 'The more developed areas (in China) are not dirty, even better than London.'

Apart from their immediate experiences, the opinions of these interview participants were also influenced by the accounts of their parents and factual statistics and reports about China. For example, Ke (girl, aged 14), who had never been to China, often cited figures of population and pollution index she had learnt from books or media reports to support her description of China as 'crowded and polluted'. B1-AN in group discussion N, on the other hand, chose to believe that China is a beautiful place as, he said, his mother always tells him how beautiful China is, how he should live there when he is older.

### **6.2.2 Economic descriptions**

In the questionnaire survey, no participants disagreed with the description of 'fast development' (88% agree and 12% neutral) in China. In individual and group interviews, the most frequently mentioned adjectives to describe

China's economy were 'strong', 'growing' and 'powerful'. The public discourse of China's rapid economic growth was often cited to support these interviewees' portrayal of China as a strong country that is growing in power at a rapid pace. But the interview data disclosed multiple interpretations of this discourse of 'China as an economic superpower'. Some interviewees pointed out the problems underlying the celebrated image of economic growth. As Simon (aged 14) said, 'some places (in China) are really rich, very upcoming but most parts are poorer than in England, like two extremes, the rich and the poor, not too many in the middle'.

For the description of 'cheap labour', there was a substantial percentage of neutral votes (34%) and a relatively small percentage of disagreement (6%) among survey respondents. In individual interviews, while those who had never been to China remained neutral on this subject, all interviewees who had visited China agreed with this description. A few (8 out of 29) complained about their unhappy shopping experiences of buying 'cheap but fake goods' (Johanna, aged 14) in China. But, later in focus group discussions, many participants took a defensive stance in response to the British media criticism of cheap and low quality Chinese goods (see Section 6.3).

### **6.2.3 Socio-cultural descriptions**

The majority (87%) of the questionnaire survey respondents agreed with the description of 'delicious food'. More than two thirds agreed China had 'interesting history' (73%) and was 'exciting' (71%). Less than 5% disagreed with the above three descriptions. As to the description of 'too many rules', half held a neutral attitude and 18% disagreed, which made it the least popular description of all. Indeed, this group of descriptions generated the most heated debates in the follow-up interviews and focus group discussions.

#### ***Taste of Home: Chinese or British food?***

Food and its meanings are often associated with culture and identity. In Mau's (2013) study, British Chinese participants considered consuming a Chinese meal at home every day as a signifier of an authentic Chinese identity. To many British Chinese young people in this study, Chinese home cooking formed an inseparable part of their daily lives and cultural identities. In some

extreme cases, to have daily Chinese meals at home was seen as one of the determining factors for their life choices. The parent interviewee Ms Yu, mother of Rachel (aged 16) and Simon (aged 14), listed compatible dietary habits as one of her principal criteria when she tried to ‘引导 guide’ her son to find a Chinese wife.

我儿子是很明确他要找中国人。就我不是说种族歧视，但是就说一个吃，外国人天天给你做蘑菇汤，已经很好的 wife 了是吧？再不就是餐餐给你买个 fish and chips，我说你连个番茄炒蛋你都没的吃。而且也许人家也会讨厌你餐餐搞得油烟瘴气。

My son is certain that he wants a Chinese wife in the future. It does not mean I am racist, but just to talk about eating alone, if a foreigner can cook you mushroom soup every day, she is already a very good wife, right? Otherwise she just buys you fish and chips for every meal. I say, you can't even have fried eggs with tomatoes. Plus, she probably will also hate the grease and smoke from the Chinese stir-fries.

For parents like Ms Yu, the habits and customs of daily food consumption were used to distinguish ‘foreigners’ and ‘Chinese’. The underlying assumption was that wives or women in the household were mainly responsible for preparing daily meals and maintaining the ‘Chineseness’ of family meals. Thus, the ability to prepare and appreciate Chinese cooking became a requirement for joining the Chinese family. Another hidden judgement was that common British food, such as mushroom soup and fish and chips, was inferior to Chinese food. Such value judgements and exclusive attitudes were explained as cultural differences rather than ‘racist’. More discussions about the spouse choices of British Chinese young people and the underlying exclusionary discourse within the British Chinese community are further discussed in Section 10.4.3.

Although the majority of the British Chinese young people agreed that Chinese food is delicious, to some of them Chinese food did not have as much significance in their lives or to their cultural identities as many Chinese



parents (like Ms Yu) had hoped. Mixed-race British Chinese young people were more likely to be exposed to both British and Chinese cuisines at home. Children like Sarah, Nicole and Alice, who were adopted by British families at a very young age, did not like Chinese food at all, even when their parents took them to Chinese restaurants every Chinese New Year. Their favourite foods were fish and chips and pizza. Even those who had Chinese home cooking every day might not appreciate the exclusivity of these Chinese meals. As Johanna (aged 14) complained,

They [Johanna's parents] just have to have rice every day. It's so boring. It's so hard to make them try any food that is not Chinese.

If Chinese food and dietary culture represented 'Chineseness', a more important question is the significance and role of this 'Chineseness' in the lives of British Chinese young people. As Julia (aged 17) described, while other children in her primary school ate sandwiches for lunch, she and her sister Gabby (aged 15) often felt embarrassed to eat their food from thermal containers. Their mother Fong, who believed in the philosophy of Chinese medicine, always prepared hot food for their daughters and forbade them to have icy drinks or food during menstruation. The two daughters often ignored their mother's 'superstitious' rules, more worried that their friends would make fun of them if they acted differently. Apart from challenging dietary habits and rules, young people, mostly the girls in this study, initiated changes in family dietary patterns by cooking non-Chinese food at home. For example, Denise (aged 13) and Josie (aged 15) were in charge of baking cookies and cakes, and making dessert for family meals. Denise also attempted to combine Chinese elements with her cookies for her school fair, and in a sense recreate representations of her identities (see Denise's photo representations in Section 6.4.3).

Those who had the opportunity to experience local cuisine in China were often amazed by the variety and significance of food in Chinese society. But not everyone was willing to embrace this dietary culture. Some interviewees like Ying (girl, aged 18) were concerned about food safety issues. Wendy

(aged 15) also shared her 'horrid' experiences dining in restaurants in China. 'You just don't know what they put in the dish, dogs, snakes and worms'. After being taken to a hotpot restaurant that served dog meat, she refused to eat any meat in restaurants during her stay. When Kuan (boy, aged 17) and five other British Chinese young people went on a summer camp to China, they still chose to eat in fast-food chain restaurants such as KFC and McDonalds whenever possible.

Kuan: I mean, I love Chinese food. But some people just like **the taste of home**. But, I mean, in China, restaurants like KFC and McDonalds still have a Chinese taste.

Interviewer: When you say 'the taste of home', what is the 'home' you are referring to?

Kuan: It's England, because most people were raised here in England. So they will be used to the British way of, the English way of life.

Although KFC and McDonalds do not specifically make British food, they offer food that may provide a sense of connection to Britain for these young people. In this sense, China is a holiday destination and Chinese food is a temporary holiday cuisine whereas globalized American fast food bears the taste of home. Thus, for these young Londoners who were exposed to British and worldwide cuisines and dietary cultures, the meanings behind food traditions were not exclusively attached to an enclosed territory or culture but were more indicative of individual choices of lifestyle led by hybrid dietary trends and globalized restaurants.

### ***China: Exciting and Interesting or Scary and Boring?***

As discussed in Section 6.2.1, the lively, sleepless and fast-changing Chinese cities were often seen as exciting and interesting compared to the 'same old, raining every day, boring Britain' (Namjyu, boy, aged 15). This was partly because most respondents went to China during the school holidays. Travelling itself is exciting for school children, regardless of the destination. But the interview respondents in this study were particularly attracted to

Chinese cities where they could go out more and interact with more people than in Britain.

A lot of Chinese people don't really stay at home that much and they like **going out a lot**, spending more money than people here.

(Kenny, aged 18)

China is a really good place because I've got loads of family and friends there and they **took me out a lot**.

(Jake, aged 16)

I think in China there's more of a sense that you know everyone who's living around you, whereas the thing is a bit less here. Plus because you are Chinese you **interact with them more**, whereas here they sort of look at you as foreigners.

(Zhengyi, boy, aged 15)

London is not a city one becomes easily bored with and Londoners were probably not in any way going out less than people in China. But the accounts above reflected these young people's experiences of growing up in London. Similar to many migrant families with limited familial and social connections in the receiving country, the major concern of many British Chinese families is to achieve financial stability. With limited time, money, information and language abilities, joining mainstream social activities was difficult for many of the British Chinese families in this study. From the interviews with young people, very few (2 out of 29) reported that their parents would go to popular social sites in Britain such as pubs and local social clubs in their free time. Regardless of their occupations, many of these Chinese parents would spend their weekday evenings at home watching TV. The ethnicities of close family friends of many parents (18 out of 24 families) in this study were reported as predominantly Chinese. With limited social, cultural and economic capital, the young British Chinese who grew up in these families had fewer familial interactions with majority-British families. In the 1990s, Parker (1993) and

Song (1997a) discussed how Chinese family catering businesses restricted the social activities of young British Chinese and further hindered their integration into mainstream society. Thirty years on, many British Chinese families were reported to have moved away from catering business, and British Chinese young people were reported in this study and by researchers elsewhere (Mau, 2013) to be much more socially active. However, the generational differences in circles of friends and choices of social activities still may generate conflicts in British Chinese families (see also Section 8.3.3).

Corresponding to the ambivalent attitudes of many survey respondents about the description of ‘too many rules’, some young British Chinese interviewees expressed mixed feelings and opinions about the way of life in China.

Chinese people, I mean the people in public, they are so rude sometimes. They barge in, spit on the floor, fight for seats on the tube. And you look at them, they have no problem.

(Johanna, aged 14)

China is a scary place...because in the place I lived, they don't care about traffic lights. Sometimes Chinese people literally drive on the pavement. They don't care for you.

(Qing, girl, aged 13)

In the eyes of these young people, Chinese children were often well disciplined with strict rules at school (see British Chinese young people's views of schooling in China in Chapter 8), but they also witnessed rule-breaking activities everyday on the streets: many of the Chinese they saw in public were rude. Similarly, Chinese history was interesting when they learned historical stories in Chinese schools or watched Chinese TV. At the same time, Chinese history was distant and sometimes distorted (see British Chinese young people's views of historical events in Section 6.2.4). These rich and complex accounts demonstrate that they were aware of the complex social realities of China, and showed that their understanding of ‘China and the Chinese’, at the socio-cultural level, were not limited by generalisations.

However, when it came to representations of China, by the UK media or by themselves, their views of China always leaned towards the positive (see Section 6.3).

#### 6.2.4 Political descriptions

Many of my respondents found it difficult to judge the Chinese political system. The questionnaire survey data showed that the description of 'corrupt government' gained the most neutral response (52%) of all descriptions and a fairly high percentage of disagreement (14%). In the individual and group interviews, many young respondents showed no interest in or knowledge about political issues related to China. Others expressed opinions based on information and viewpoints heard from news reports, parents and relatives' conversations.

B1: If you are a politician in this country you will get like  
£150,000 a year.

B3: But if you are a politician in China, you will get paid loads,  
because of **bribery**.

I: How do you know?

B1: Media, because on media it's a very **typical** thing to say  
about China.

(Group discussion GW, I-Interviewer)

G1: China is strong, but China is not as free; they still **control**  
**websites** that people can go on.

B1: Say if in England, you say David Cameron is gay, they  
won't arrest you. If you say Hu Jintao (Chairman of China  
at that time) is gay (all laugh), then they will.

G1: Yeah, they will get their heads chopped off.

B1: No, you won't get your head chopped off, you will get a  
death injection.

(Group discussion GS)

As seen from the conversations, these young people's opinions of current political issues in China were negative. These negative accounts often make comparisons with the British political system and sometimes dramatize the differences to reinforce the image of 'corrupted', 'censored' and 'autocratic' China. On the other hand, historical events such as the Cultural Revolution<sup>24</sup> and The Tian'anmen square protests<sup>25</sup> were rarely mentioned by respondents in group discussions and interviews. Very few were able to comment on these events owing to their lack of knowledge.

I've heard of the Tian'anmen Protest, wasn't it like loads of people went there, and then a lot of people died? I don't really know it so I can't comment on it.

(Tingyi, girl, aged 13)

It is massacre. It says on the news that the protesters got massacred. But I don't know why.

(GN-B3)

In their discussions, British media was often cited as one of the main information sources for young people's opinions about political issues in China. But the absence of information and discussion about Chinese political events in British Chinese families reflected the role of Chinese parents in shaping their children's political perceptions of 'China and the Chinese'. Many (18 out of 29) British Chinese young people reported that their Chinese parents tend to only disclose positive information about China. Even parent interviewee Ms. Wong, whose husband settled in Britain as a refugee after the Tian'anmen Square Protest, avoided discussing their own experiences or any '敏感 sensitive' political issues with their children. She and her husband tried to maintain a '正面的印象 positive impression' of China because she did not want the past to become a burden on her children. Ms. Lin, the head teacher of School N and also the mother of a sixteen-year-old boy, insisted that having a positive impression of China was extremely important for overseas Chinese, even if they had already changed nationalities. She believed that the Chinese as an ethnic group would benefit from the growing

power of China, in business and career development, as well as gaining respect from mainstream British society.

All seven parents I interviewed admitted that they would not actively discuss Chinese political issues with their children. As Ms. Liang said,

对他们来说，中国就是一个故国，就是经济发展快，亲戚全在那儿，而且以后还是有可能回去发展，这就足够了。

To them [the children], China is a home country, is fast developing economically, is the place where all their relatives are living, and is the place where in future they may go back to live and work. That is enough.

If the children asked about the criticism of politics in China, five of the parents claimed that they would be obliged to give ‘一个英国的老师，学校或者西方媒体给不了的画面 (a perspective that British teachers, schools and western media cannot provide)’, and then they would leave their children to make their own judgment. As to more specific events, all the parents I interviewed admitted that the Chinese government has made regrettable ‘历史的错误 (historical mistakes)’. But they always emphasised that they hoped their children understood these events within the context and remained confident in the current Chinese government. Parent interviewee Ms Liang described her mixed feelings towards the controversial Chinese political system:

六四的时候我不在中国，那时候天天就在那边看 CNN 还有 BBC 报那个血淋淋的镇压。整整两个月，没有一天不是头条新闻，看了以后天天就哭。然后那个时候有同事就问我，既然你那么不喜欢这个政府，你别选他就是了。然后我就说，你说得这句话就像一个女王说穷人没有饭吃就给他吃蛋糕。外国人始终还是不明白的。就是现在这个体制的话对中国来说，未必不合适。这个 democratic 的话在当时对中国不一定是最好的选择。如果说你 democratic，国家肯定要乱，说不定中国现在吃不饱饭的人会比现在更多。

I was not in China during the Tian'anmen Square Protest. Every day I watched CNN and BBC reporting the bloody repression. The whole two months, not one day was it not in the headlines. I cried day after day. At that time, a colleague of mine asked me, if you really don't like the government, just don't vote for them. Then I said, what you said is like a queen asking why the poor can't have cakes if they don't have bread. The foreigners would not understand. What I mean is that the current system for China may not be unsuitable. The democratic system may not be the best choice for China at that time. If the democratic system was chosen then, the country would be in a mess; probably more Chinese would be starving than is the case now.

(Ms. Liang)

Although these parents had lived in the UK for more than twenty years, they still referred to Britain as 'foreign' and maintained a strong attachment to their home country. It is important to note that all the parents I interviewed originated from Mainland China except Ms Wong, who was ethnic Chinese from Malaysia. Therefore, their views only represented a certain group of Chinese immigrants in Britain. But with the increasing number of immigrants from the Chinese mainland (see Chapter 2), their interpretations and perceptions of China will influence the next generation. Young people such as Gang (boy, aged 16) and Zhengyi (boy, aged 15) expressed similar opinions as these parents:

站在一个从整个国家考虑的位置上。那政府做的，虽然有可能太过了，但是必须得镇压下去。我觉得任何国家的政府都不会让局面无法控制的。

If you think from the position of the country as a whole, what the government did, although it is too much, the repression probably is a must. I think any government would not let the situation get out of control.

(Gang is talking about the Tian'anmen Square Protest)



- I: So you think Chinese government is corrupt?
- Zhengyi: I think they are moving away from it, 'cause just like the recent movements, the economy, and the ideology are changing.
- I: Do you read about this in the news?
- Zhengyi: No, I do politics at school. And my parents, they will read the news on the internet and sometimes they just discuss it and I will listen.

(I-Interviewer)

Parker (1999: p. 291) found it a 'puzzle' that the overseas Chinese identity 'was coupled with dis-identification from China and its contemporary politics'. In the present study, British Chinese young people often took a distant and ambivalent position towards politics in China. On the one hand, they were aware of the 'typical' image of Chinese politics in the British media. They actively referred to these news reports as part of their knowledge of China. On the other hand, when it came to expressing their own opinions about Chinese politics, many remained neutral. Some found it irrelevant to their lives because it 'doesn't affect me (them)' (Emily, aged 15) while others found it difficult to judge because they heard the other side of the story from their parents or relatives in China.

Data from the questionnaire survey showed that in many aspects British Chinese young people shared similar views about China and the Chinese. In later discussions, however, they demonstrated their knowledge and experience on certain topics that went far beyond generalized descriptions. Personal transnational experiences, such as visits to China and interactions with Chinese relatives and friends, contributed to varied and rich accounts of their immediate impressions, for instance, of crowded, polluted and dirty locations. But for more abstract evaluations such as 'corrupt government' and 'fast development', these young interviewees often relied on information provided by British media and parents. During this process, they often talked about China as a distant country or a holiday destination, but with close family ties. They often focused on aspects that differed from their current daily lives,

which brought them excitement as well as discomfort. They did not actively identify themselves with China or as Chinese. However, when China or Chinese people were criticized by the British media, the attitudes of these young British Chinese changed dramatically.

### **6.3 Interpreting representations of China and the Chinese in British media**

In order to address the research question about how British Chinese young people interpret British media representations of 'China and the Chinese', I organised a semi-structured discussion after showing a ten-minute clip from the BBC documentary *The Chinese are Coming*.<sup>26</sup> This documentary, presented by the British journalist Justin Rowlatt, was first broadcast in February 2011 and provoked considerable public debate on the spread of Chinese influence around the world. Owing to limited time, I only showed participants in group discussions one clip from Episode 2.<sup>27</sup> The clip showed how Chinese government and business people were exploiting the raw resources and people of the Amazon; meanwhile, in Brazil and America, local industries were threatened by cheap Chinese imports and hardworking Chinese businessmen.

In focus group discussions, to avoid possible bias, I asked participants to comment on British media representations of China in general before showing the video clip. The more specific discussion about the clip was held afterwards. In in-depth interviews, I did not have time to show the video clip so I only asked in general about British media representations of China and the Chinese. Thus, I can examine young people's responses to media representations in general as well as on specific topics based on individual and group interviews.

### 6.3.1 Interpretations in group discussions

In the group discussions, participants tended to take the media criticism of China as a form of racism and react defensively, especially in groups of younger participants (13-15 years old). When I firstly asked their opinions of the British media's representations of 'China and the Chinese' in general, younger participants were more likely to think the representations were biased and racist. Older children (aged 16-18) agreed that there were stereotypical representations in the media, but rather than reacting emotionally, they tried to offer their own explanations for these media representations:

B1-GE: I do think that the English people should **respect** Chinese people more.

G3-GS: There is so much **racism** and **stereotypes**. Yeah, so stop **looking down** on us.

Quotations extracted from group discussion GE and GS

B2-AN: I think the British media are willing to accept China as a new power 'cause they are **fairly cautious** with their reports, I mean they are not panicking, or demonizing China, so I think they are reporting China **as fairly as they can** with their knowledge. They are still, there will always be something that they just **don't understand** about China. So all the while they are still trying to put **their own twist** on it.

B1-AN: The British media mainly talk about the bad things and not good things [about China]. It might be because of the **country conflicts** that I don't know of. But I think the media are **biased** from what I know.

G1-AS: Democracy, communist, one child policy, that's about all they can mention about China. To some extent, **it's true**

you know. But it is **not necessarily bad**. They think it is bad, but maybe it's not actually that bad.

Quotations extracted group discussions AN and AS

Young people in the GCSE groups mentioned key words such as 'respect', 'looking down', 'stereotypes' and 'racism', suggesting that they thought the British media intentionally misrepresents 'China and the Chinese' either by harsh criticism or overgeneralizations. Participants in A-level discussion groups pointed out that the potential bias of the British media was owing to a fixation on negative aspects of 'China and the Chinese'. But they also admitted to the 'truthfulness' of these news reports/documentaries and interpreted them as the result of unavoidable cultural misunderstandings, international conflicts and different value and ideological systems.

After watching the clip from the BBC documentary, the discussions in both groups became rather heated. In the two GCSE groups, even before the video clip finished, some of the participants started to shout 'racist!'. Many felt insulted by the title of the documentary. As Ming (boy, aged 14) said,

From the title '*The Chinese are Coming*', it's like **they** just think **we** are some random alien groups so that **we** are gonna invade and take **their** country and **their** money, and that is just wrong. **They** think the Chinese are the devil.

In the discussion of allegations that some Chinese products had dominated the Brazilian and American markets and threatened local business, GCSE students argued that Britain and the world should just 'deal with it'. As several of them said,

If **they** stop using it [Chinese products], China will stop producing that kind of stuff... But **they** are still using it, **they** are the ones who want **us** to be there. If you open a white person's wardrobe, nine out of ten of their stuff is made in China.

(Emily, aged 15)

It is just business. Yes, if **they** don't like it, why don't **they** get white people to do that, paying them 6 pounds per hour, and everyone use **their** stuff then?

(Namjyu, boy, aged 15)

Particularly noticeable is the way they used the subject pronouns 'we/us' and 'they' in their conversations. In this context, they identified themselves as among the 'Chinese' by using 'we/us' and refer to the British media or others as 'they'. When the British media criticized 'China', a place most of them see as familiar but largely irrelevant to their lives (as shown in Section 6.2), somehow they suddenly felt that they, too, had been attacked. They refused to consider whether there was any factual evidence in the reports and kept shouting 'shut up!' to the documentary presenter. Emily (aged 15), a British born half-Vietnamese and half-Chinese commented, in her east London accent, 'Yeah, I do care about the image of China. And they are being racist, yeah. But I'm not secondary, no sorry mate, I'm not.' She had only been to China once on a school trip. Formerly she described herself as being 'totally out of place all the time' when she was in China. She hated learning Chinese; yet, she defended China fiercely and directly linked the image of China to her own social and ethnic status in Britain. It was surprising to see such defensive reactions in group discussions coming from people who hardly identified with China in other settings.

These reactions could be partly explained by the use of the all-encompassing term 'Chinese'. In the video clips, the term 'Chinese' specifically refers to Chinese residents, but for the British Chinese audience, 'Chinese' is also an ethnic category, often attached to themselves. With the various cultural, political and migration backgrounds of the overseas Chinese in Britain, not all of these young people identified with the 'China and the Chinese' often described in the UK media. However, when there is only one label available in public discourse, it was difficult for these young people to subscribe to only one of the meanings of 'China': China as their ethnic origin, China as the root of their familial cultural heritage, China as the world's new superpower or

China as the problematic communist state. These young participants often shifted their identifications between British and Chinese in different settings. But when China was under scrutiny from British mainstream media, their Chineseness became the most salient aspect of their identity. Their identities were not dominated by exclusive territorial claims, which may signify different meanings for these young people; rather, their cultural identities were formed as a diaspora, which is always 'constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth' (Hall, 1990). They were compelled to retaliate against the media's criticism when the undeniable parts of their identities were under attack.

Discussions with participants in A-level groups were much calmer, although they all agreed that the documentary was biased. Unlike their younger counterparts, none of them mentioned racism in the discussion; instead, they explained the bias as the result of 'jealousy' and the 'tactics' of international media war and competition.

I think they are **jealous** that in a way China is a **threat**, but I don't know.

(G1-AS)

It's a little bit biased, they are taking the view that the Chinese are taking over the business of everyone else. But I think China would probably do the same thing if they were in America's position.

(B2-AN)

I think it is a political tactic that any country would play in this circumstance. 哪个国家会想让中国升那么快？所以他必须想办法去限制中国得发展，那么就利用言论上面得压力。所以如果只看媒体言论或这表面，那都似乎是很为别人着想，实际心里只有一个目的就是控制中国的发展。

I think it is a **political tactic** that any country would play in this circumstance. Which country would wish China to develop so quickly? So they must find a way to **repress China's development**, thus they use public discourse to exert pressure. So if you only look at the media discourses, it seems that they are very considerate for others, but actually in their minds their only goal is to suppress the development of China.

(B1-AN)

Since this documentary was about the activities of the Chinese government and businessmen in Brazil and the Amazon, none of these young participants had the knowledge or previous experience needed to verify whether the media representations were biased. Still, they chose to question the motives and credibility of the documentary. Although these older participants did not relate the media criticism to intentional racism, they believed that the media or Britain were intentionally suppressing the development of China by fixing on its negative side. Like the younger participants, their inclination was to maintain a positive image of China and the Chinese, and this was not limited to this one example. During my participant observations in Chinese schools, I witnessed several similar incidents where Chinese school pupils were reluctant to accept criticism of China in the British media. However, as shown in Section 6.2, when they described 'China and the Chinese', they often cited information and criticism from the British media. In a sense, it was not a matter of what was said but more who said it and with whom it was interpreted. As Wendy (aged 15) told me after the group discussion AN,

I know there is truth in it (the documentary), but I will be on their (Chinese) side. Because I feel I'm **more Chinese**, I don't want to be an **outsider**.

These young people assumed that the Chinese school settings, among British Chinese peers, were 'spaces' in which Chineseness should be more salient. The strong sense of seeking affirmation from fellow group members,

especially among the younger participants, could partly explain their reactions and interpretations of British media representations.

### 6.3.2 Interpretations as individuals

Compared to the fierce reactions in the group discussions, frustration and ambivalence were the most common feelings expressed by participants in the individual interviews.

I suppose like the British media, or British people, would associate China with cheap goods and illegal CDs and stuff. I suppose it's a bit offensive. But some parts of it are quite true, so you can't really argue against it, and expect to win... Obviously **I'm considered to be Chinese** so I'm not gonna offend **my country** and saying China is a rubbish country. Because it's not always true either.

(Yunke, girl, aged 14)

Like, I disapprove of the things in China as myself and also we sometimes feel a bit indignant as a family that **the western people** keep criticizing **our** ways, so it is a bit on both sides.

(Rachel, aged 16)

On the one hand, the interviewees felt it was difficult to argue against the criticism of China in the British media. On the other hand, they were reluctant to accept criticism of China because they were 'considered to be Chinese' and it was 'their ways' being judged, hence their emotional responses. As Yunke said, she was 'considered to be Chinese' because of her appearance, family background, and ethnic and cultural origins. The label 'Chinese', ascribed to her by others, attached social expectations of what she was 'supposed to' do and say. But there were many aspects of the all-encompassing label 'Chinese' that these young people could not comprehend, let alone identify with, defend or contest. Their Chineseness, as Ang (1998, p. 238) describes, was 'fundamentally relational and externally defined, as much as it is partial.' But the classificatory practice of the dominant discourse, operating as a



territorializing power effectively marginalized these young people as the 'other'. Thus, these young people's best strategy in the face of the British media criticism of China was avoiding confrontation and maintaining a neutral stance.

Usually I'll just...I'm a more **neutral** guy. I see things from different points of view. I **can't do much about it** [media criticism of China/Chinese] anyway.

(David, aged 18)

I think people take it [media representation] as stereotypes, it's more like a joke, they **don't take it very seriously**, they know China is definitely not like a communist dictatorship as the media shows and one of my friends was on holiday there and they commented on how nice the place is.

(Zhengyi, boy, aged 15)

I will just **keep an open mind** and see what they (media) say in it, and I have my own view. I don't think it will really influence me that much. I think I'm **impartial**.

(Julia, aged 17)

These young interviewees detached themselves from the 'China' criticized in the British media, admitting the unlikelihood of initiating political or social change by themselves, making jokes and hoping others would share their point of view. The media representations that evoked strong reactions in focus group discussions were often brushed away by strategies of detachment that minimize the discomfort and frustrations brought about by media discourses.

Regarding mainstream British school settings, this study relied on these young interviewees' accounts of whether and how they discuss media representations of China with their non-Chinese peers. The young interviewees in this study reported that they rarely discussed China or Chinese-related issues with their friends because they had 'too many other

things to worry about' (David, aged 18). Those who had discussed the issues would often take the middle ground and try to show both sides of the story.

I will tell them that the thing with the western media, or any media, is that the majority of the time everything is true, but it is just **it might not be the whole truth**.

(Gang, boy, aged 16)

I am ok with the negative stuff, but I would probably try to **explain or persuade** other people why that happened. I don't want to be too biased; I just want to **stay in the middle**.

(Kenny, aged 18)

For these young people, being 'Chinese' in these settings did not involve the vigorous defence of 'us' from the criticism of 'others', as was the case in group discussions in Chinese schools. Instead of focusing on the right or wrong judgement, these interviewees resorted to the opinionated nature of almost all media, or the difference in perspectives to explain the 'negative stuff' about China in the British media. This strategy successfully allowed these young people to avoid the dilemma of taking sides when aspects of their ascribed identities, which they themselves may not comprehend or identify with, were criticized. Such strategies also helped them to detach themselves from the perceived 'negative' without denying their ethnic/cultural origin.

As shown in this section, interpretations of media representations of 'China and the Chinese' were contested depending on different contexts, the power relations within each context and the positioning British Chinese young people adopted. As these young diasporic members avoided choosing sides and improvised different discourses in various settings for their use, they internalized the idea of and attachment to the encompassing, symbolic 'China and the Chinese'. With such diverse interpretations and act, the next section shows the visual representations of 'China and the Chinese' by eight young participants.

## **6.4 Participatory photography workshop: representations of China and the Chinese**

This section discusses the results and reflections from three stages of the participatory photography workshop project 'China and the Chinese through my eyes'. During each stage, the visual data were analysed together with the narratives of their authors in order to understand how participants form and elaborate their thoughts and personal stories through planning, taking, selecting and arranging photographs, and finally how the process of visual representation might reveal their cultural identities.

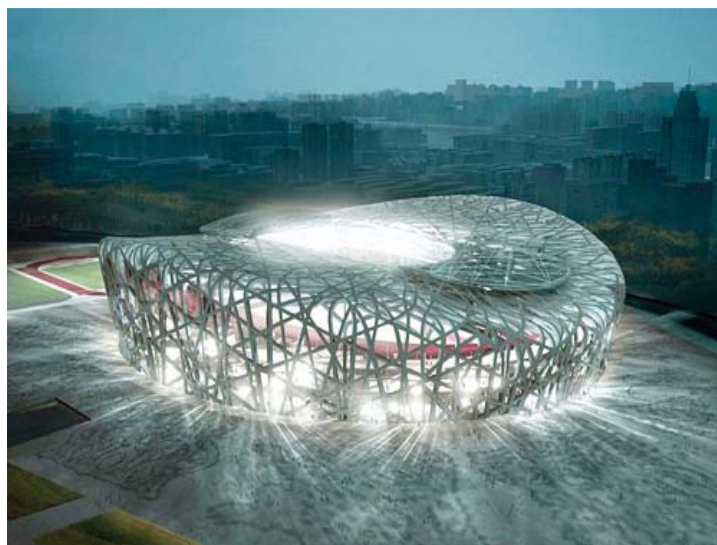
### **6.4.1 Stage 1: planning**

As discussed in Chapter 5, the first stage of the workshop consisted of ten sessions covering photography skills, ethical guidelines and hands-on activities that prepared participants for the final projects. The preoperational task in the participatory photography workshop asked participants to search for and pick three to five pictures that best represented their perceptions of China/Chinese, Britain/British and homeland. The purpose was to visually specify the meanings of the abstract concepts and rehearse the photograph-based discussion for their own project. It was important to note that the representations available for them to choose on the internet to a certain extent have already been selected or ranked by others through online searching tools. Thus the images they selected and themes emerging in this stage were analysed and compared with visual representations produced by authors in later stage.

### **Visualizing China and the Chinese**

To represent China and the Chinese, three themes were extracted from the photographs chosen by participants in the workshop. The most important theme was Chinese landmarks, architecture and landscapes, within which iconic historical architecture was the most chosen subject (see Figure 11). For example, all eight participants chose the image of the Great Wall of China to represent China. Other historical sites chosen were mainly located in Beijing, the capital of China, such as the Forbidden City and the Summer Palace. The second favourite type was images of idealized classical Chinese countryside

landscapes. Participants chose photographs of paddy fields, pictures of a meandering river flanked by solitary hills and scenery with symbolic Chinese plants such as pine trees and bamboo. Only one participant chose the theme of modern Chinese architecture to represent China. The three photographs she chose were a night view of Victoria Harbour in Hong Kong, a night view of the Shanghai Bund and the Bird's Nest Stadium built for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.



**Figure 11: Photographs chosen to represent China: The Great Wall, paddy fields and Bird's Nest Stadium**

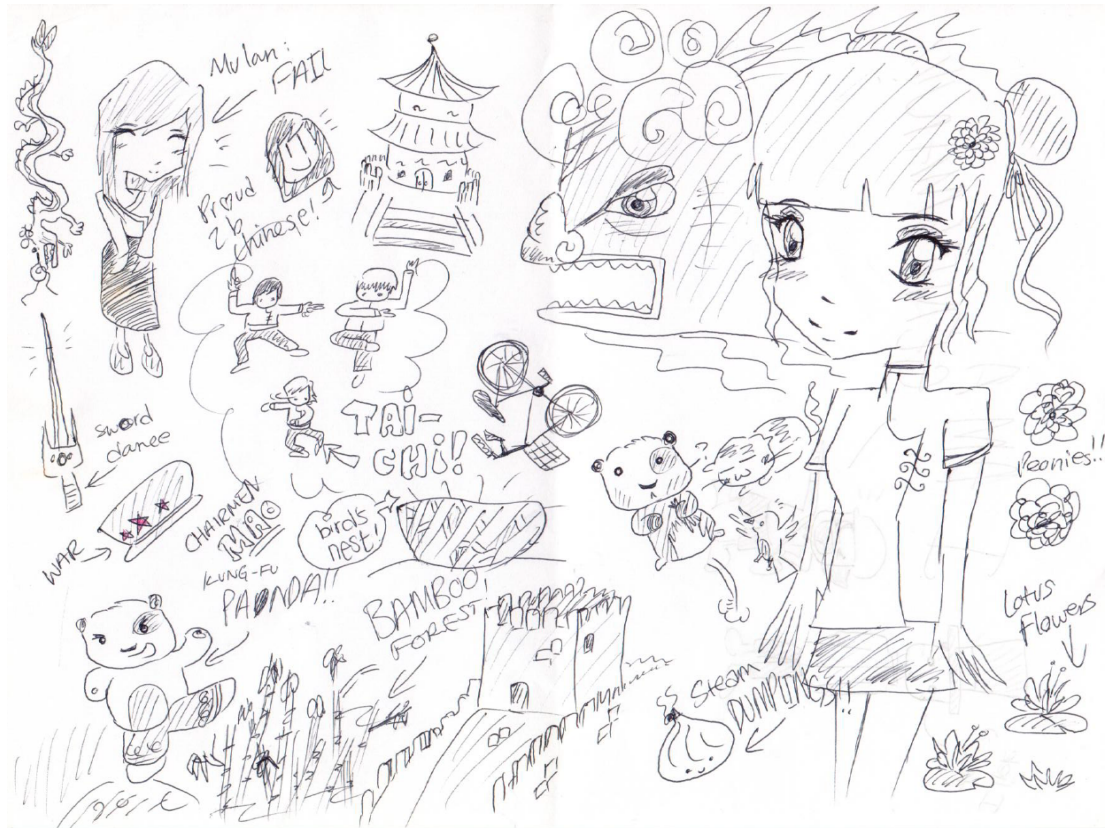
In the visual representations of Chinese people (see Figure 12), photographs of Chairman Mao were chosen by all participants. The other popular choice was Chinese people in traditional clothing with accessories such as fans and swords. Traditional Chinese cultural activities such as the dragon dance, sword dance and dumpling-making were also selected.



**Figure 12: Photographs chosen to represent Chinese: Chairman Mao and his army, a Chinese woman in a traditional Chinese dress and a dragon dance**



These photographs corresponded with another type of visual representation: drawings of perceptions of China/Chinese, which I collected from focus group discussions. Figure 13 was drawn by a fifteen-year-old girl in a GS group discussion, in which she illustrated all the visual symbols in her mind that represent 'China and the Chinese'.



**Figure 13: Drawing: Perceptions of China and the Chinese, by G3-G**

The themes in this drawing include: iconic architecture (the Great Wall of China, the Bird's Nest Stadium and the Temple of Heaven); culturally significant plants (bamboo, lotus flowers and peonies); animals (dragon and panda); symbolic objects (bicycles, sword, Chinese army hat and Chinese stone lions); food (steamed dumplings); cultural activities (Tai-Chi and sword dance); historical figures (Chairman Mao and Mulan); and people in traditional Chinese clothing (Mulan, Tai-Chi players and the girl in traditional Chinese clothes with two hair buns). On the top left, she also put herself in the drawing as part of the representation of Chinese with the declaration — 'Proud 2 b Chinese'.

G3-GS was one of the few participants who included animated characters found in popular media products into her representation of China/Chinese, even though these Chinese characters — ‘Kung Fu Panda’ and ‘Mulan’ were created by the American animation industry. ‘They are my favourite Chinese cartoon characters’, she said. But when I asked her whether the animations of Kung Fu panda and Mulan represent China and the Chinese she said,

Not really, it is sort of different, ’cause they are films, they are trying to sell it to a wider audience, not just to Chinese. Some parts are obviously not Chinese, like a woman serving in the army.

Then she wrote ‘FAIL’ [to represent] on top of the figure of Mulan. She believed that the story was made up by modern Americans because it would never have happened in the traditionally patriarchal Chinese society. Clearly, she did not know that the film of Mulan was based on a well-known Chinese legend, in which Mulan was a female warrior who disguised as a man and took her father’s place in the army.

Apart from American-made Chinese characters, G3-GS also adopted Japanese-style Chinese animated characters: the Chinese girl in traditional Chinese dress with two hair buns. Although the hairstyle and the dress are traditional Chinese, the cartoon image of the Chinese girl was created by Japanese anime game designers (see Figure 17 in Appendix for the character of Chunli, a Chinese female fighter in the 1980s Japanese anime game ‘*Street Fighter*’). Later, Chunli became an iconic figure in representations of Chinese girls worldwide and has been adapted into different styles. As a Japanese manga fan, G3-GS’s drawing was heavily influenced by the manga drawing style. For example, the Chinese girl looks like a typical manga female character, which usually has eyes with exaggerated shape and size, a small nose, pointed face and slim figure. It also reflected the influence of the globalized American and Japanese media and youth culture on British Chinese young people (see further discussion in Section 7.5).



### **Visualizing Britain/British**

Architectural landmarks were also the favourite choices to represent Britain and the British, particularly buildings in central London, such as the Houses of Parliament, the London Eye and Buckingham Palace. Only one participant chose a picture of a British castle in countryside (see Figure 14).



**Figure 14: Photographs chosen to represent Britain: the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, Buckingham Palace and a British castle**

The second most common theme was culturally significant objects, such as the Union Jack flag, London black cabs and tea (see Figure 15). The only iconic British person chosen by participants was Queen Elizabeth II. Compared to the representations of China/Chinese, the photographs chosen to represent Britain/British were more related to popular culture and current issues, such as a poster for one of the Harry Potter films, the *Dr. Who* TV series and the TV drama *Merlin*. Three participants also mentioned 'economic recession', which was the most heated topic in public discourse at the time of this project.



**Figure 15: Photographs chosen to represent British: A London bus, a cup of English tea, a poster for a Harry Potter film, and the 'British pound in recession'**

### **Visualizing homeland**

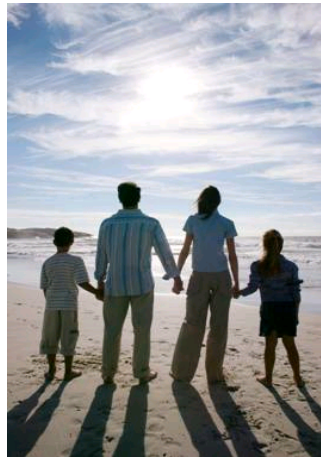
The most popular way of visualising 'homeland' was listing the location where participants and their family were living. For example, Denise (aged 13) took a photograph of the nearest tube station to her home. Ming (boy, aged 14) chose a view of the park nearest to his house, saying,

To me, homeland means the place where I was brought up,  
places that I remember since I was small.

The second way to represent 'homeland' was using pictures of an idealized place shared with family and filled with peace and love. Only one participant, Lu (girl, aged 13), chose a photograph of the Chinese countryside to represent 'homeland' as the place she originally came from and belonged to (see Figure 16 - 18).



**Figure 16: 'Homeland is where I am living now', by Denise (aged 13)**



**Figure 17: 'Homeland is filled with love, peace and harmony', by Lanke (girl, aged 13)**



**Figure 18: 'My homeland is the place where I belong and where I come from. I picture China as a calm place', by Lu (girl, aged 13)**



From the above we can see that the visual representations of China/Chinese chosen by participants tended to concentrate on historical icons and traditional cultural symbols. Meanwhile, American and Japanese popular media products influenced the contemporary representations of Chinese history and culture. The visual representation of Britain chosen by participants also emphasised historical and cultural icons, but British popular culture, especially in media products, was equally celebrated. All participants in the photography workshop reached consensus that 'homeland' is a place filled with love and peace, to which they and their family belong. It was more often thought to be the place where they were currently living rather than the place from which they had emigrated.

#### **6.4.2 Stage 2: photograph selection**

As described in Chapter 5, six of the participants in this workshop went to a summer camp in China and the other two participants stayed in London. In the two-hour discussion of the photograph selections, each of the participants had a ten-minute presentation about when, where and why they took their photographs. The task in this stage was to decide which ten to fifteen photographs would go into the final exhibition. From the discussion, I tried to see what stood out from the photographs and link it to participants' experiences. However, the process was at times frustrating when they explained the reasons for taking these photographs as: 'because it looks nice'; or 'I don't know, I can't remember'. Not every photograph had a story, contained deep meanings, or disclosed complex identities. I had many concerns about the validity and fluidity of the interpretations by both the authors and researchers during this stage of the research. For visual signs, the problem of meaning arises from the fact that the relation between the signifier and the signified is not arbitrary (Berger, 1990). Thus the purpose of participatory method is to probe meanings from visual creators, but more importantly to explore the ways in which meanings were created and negotiated between the researcher and participants in different social contexts, as illustrated in the following three examples. The process reveals the ways of thinking and the identities of both the researcher and the

researched. It also provoked reflections on the use of the visual participatory method.

### ***Meaning lost in interpretations?***



**Figure 19: A Shopping Mall in Shanghai, China**

Figure 19 is a picture taken by Kuan (boy, aged 17) in Shanghai. The key subject in the photograph is a shopping mall at dusk with beautiful lighting. The shopping mall is a modern concrete and steel building but it is decorated with traditional Chinese elements such as the pavilion roof and eaves, dark wooden panels inscribed with the gold-painted name of the shopping mall and two golden dragons at either side of the name board. Apart from the mixture of modern and traditional elements, the photograph also shows a combination of Chinese and western symbols. While the golden dragons occupy the centre position in the photograph, it is also hard to miss the two signboards for the McDonalds chain restaurants at both sides of the entrance. The connotative meanings of this picture can be explained by the complaints of some of the British Chinese young people about how China had been westernized and lost

its traditional values and culture. On the other hand, it could also be interpreted in the light of another popular discourse among these young people, namely that the rise of China as an economic superpower has broken American's unipolar domination. These two interpretations were not my speculations but were based on the accounts of participants in the first two group discussions in the early stage of my research. However, the author Kuan told me that he took the photograph simply 'because the building and the lights are nice'. Tired of my attempts to elicit 'meaningful' interpretations, he refused to give any answers and said, 'If we have to explain why we took the photograph, it just lost the meaning of taking photos'.

So, would the meaning be lost and twisted in the visual interpretations? Should I settle with the meanings of these photographs as being merely 'nice' and 'beautiful'? Unsatisfied with Kuan's explanations, I decided to discuss this photograph with all the participants in the workshop. Very quickly, both versions of interpretations I mentioned above emerged from their discussion. Even though Kuan did not comment on this photograph in the group discussion, he was more open to talk about his other photographs afterwards. Furthermore, he was inspired by this discussion and organised his photographs to represent the cultural blend of old and new, western and eastern in contemporary China (see Kuan's photograph project in Appendix 13). This example demonstrates that the meanings of photographs for the author keep changing and evolving long after the moment at which they are taken. Even for the author, there is no single or true interpretation of the photograph. A valid analysis of photographs produced in the participatory photography workshop was built on the researcher's knowledge about the participants, which revealed how meanings are formed in end products, and what possible influences this interpretation may have received during this process.

### ***Different contexts, different representations***

Figure 20 is a photograph also taken by Kuan. The reason he took this photograph was that he noticed his summer camp team could never finish the food they ordered during their meals in China. 'Chinese always order too much food, such a waste' he frowned as he showed me the photograph. However, in the final exhibition, he wrote the following caption: 苏州丰盛的一餐, A wonderful meal in Suzhou' (Suzhou is a major city in Jiangsu Province of east China).



**Figure 20: A wonderful meal in Suzhou, by Kuan**

Indeed, the change of captions directed the viewers' attention away from three plates full of leftovers towards the empty plates and bowls scattered on the table. Multiple and even contradictory connotative meanings can be constructed from the same photo: one shameful and disapproving, and the



other joyful and satisfying. When I asked Kuan why he did not show his original intentions in the caption, he said, 'It's an exhibition for Chinese people, are we **supposed** to say bad things about China?' Even though I had told all participants that they could represent the negative aspects of China and the Chinese, most of them still chose to avoid negativity and criticism of China in the exhibition with Chinese teachers, parents and their schoolmates as the main audience.

This meaning-changing action had at least two implications. Firstly, authors' representations and interpretations of their photographs may change according to the contexts and audiences. From a casual classroom discussion with peers to the formal photograph exhibition, Kuan presented his photograph differently in order to fit the perceived unspoken rules exerted by different contexts and audiences. Therefore, visual representations, like verbal accounts, do not always express the true thoughts of participants. Thus, to analyse the process of image production is equally as important as the analysis of the end product.

Secondly, it is worth exploring why participants commonly thought it was inappropriate to show negative aspects about China in the exhibition. For example, only one of the six participants on the trip to China took photographs that showed pollution. It was very common for them to criticize 'China and the Chinese' in casual chats with each other, in focus group discussions and even in interviews with me. But when the image of China became a public representation, either in the British media or their own work, they tended to decline or brush away the negative representations. As shown in Section 6.3, this indicates that these young people identified themselves, at least in part, as Chinese and always tried to maintain a positive image of China and the Chinese.

*'Why do you want me to choose this photo?'*



**Figure 21: Road sign for the Sex Culture Museum in Hangzhou, by Johanna**

Figure 21 was taken by Johanna (aged 14) in Hangzhou city, eastern China. The focus of this photograph is a road sign to the '性文化博物馆 Sex Culture Museum'. I was surprised to see this picture because in China 'sex' is not yet a topic for public discussion, let alone to exhibit as 'culture' in museums. Johanna explained that she took the photograph because she did not expect to see a sex museum in China. She thought sex was a taboo topic in China and also in most British Chinese families. Johanna was one of the few young people I knew who would choose to talk about sex or make sexual jokes in Chinese school. Because most Chinese teachers did not understand her sexual puns in English, she particularly enjoyed the fact that she could make fun of teachers and laugh with her peers without being punished. I thought this photograph would be very interesting in the exhibition because it was personal to the author as it showed her teenage curiosity about sex, but also demonstrated changing public opinions about the topic of sex in China. It

should also be very interesting to see how the audience might interpret this photograph. However, Johanna refused to select this photograph from her album for exhibition. When I asked her why not, she did not answer but turned around and asked me 'Why do you want me to choose this photo?'

Johanna refused to cooperate because she was afraid she would get into trouble if her parents, who never talked to her about sex-related issues, saw it exhibited. In the end, she still included this photograph in her album for the exhibition after discussing it with her mother. As a result of my exchanges with Kuan and Johanna, I realized that when I tried to understand and help participants to choose their photographs, I imposed my own interpretations and anticipations on them. Sometimes participants went along with my expectations, such as Kuan agreeing to take on the theme we discussed for his photograph exhibition. Other times they compromised their opinions to fit in with social expectations, such as changing their interpretations of the same photograph. As discussed in Section 5.7, the multiple roles I adopted have influenced the responses from participants. But Johanna's question - Why do you, a researcher, want to elicit a particular message from the participants? - prompted me to reflect on how my intentions and actions may shaped the production and interpretation of the visual data that was used. However, using reflexivity in research is not only to provide a confession of one's own, personal, unconscious reactions, the function of using reflexivity is to situate data analysis into its broader social or political context (Finlay, 2002). For example, Kuan's tendency to changing titles of photographs, or Johanna's hesitation to show one particular photograph, shed more light on understanding of the socially situated identities of participants than merely interpreting the possible 'meanings' of the photographs.

#### **6.4.3 Stage 3: photograph exhibition analysis**

All eight participants completed the final project 'China/Chinese through my eyes' for the photography exhibition. The first category contained projects based on the summer camp in China and the second category included projects completed in Britain. One project from each category is shown in the

Appendix (see Appendix 13 and 14) with translated captions in order to provide an example of the content and structure of the exhibition.

### **Projects based in China**

The summer camp that the six participants joined was part of the 2010 'Overseas Chinese roots-seeking tour' organised by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council and the China Overseas Exchange Association. More than 6,000 young overseas Chinese from all over the world participated in this tour. The UK participants of this tour were mainly selected through Chinese community language schools and organised by the UKAPCE. All of my participants visited Shanghai for the 2010 World Exposition, Suzhou, Hangzhou and surrounding rural areas. Two of the participants (Johanna and Sophia) went further north to Beijing. The other four finished their tour in Shanghai and joined their respective families to visit relatives in different parts of China. Three main themes emerged from the photographs and discussions with participants after the tour, reflecting their tourist and family visits in China, and the cultural values and perceptions of China they held beyond this particular trip.

#### ***Theme 1: Westernization, tradition and hybridity***

This is a theme filled with the vivid contrast of modern and traditional, western and Chinese, as well as the blending of the old and the new, the foreign and the local. The most typical representations of this theme were photographs of Chinese landscape and architecture in big cities such as Shanghai and other smaller towns. The photographs of Shanghai portrayed a sleepless metropolitan city with crisscross highways, a busy nightlife and a panoramic view of the city as a concrete jungle (see Figure 22 and Kuan's photograph slides 17-18). On the other hand, the focus of the photographs taken in Suzhou and surrounding rural areas was the tranquil and traditional beauty of Chinese towns. Such photographs included iconic symbols such as traditional-style canal ferries, bridges and classical gardens (see Figure 23 and Kuan's photograph slides 4 to 6 and 14).





**Figure 22: 俯瞰上海 Panoramic view of Shanghai, by Lu (girl, aged 13)**



**Figure 23: 小桥流水人家, under a small bridge near a cottage a stream flows, by Johanna (girl, aged 14)**

The strong contrast of urban and rural, modern and traditional was vividly represented in their photographs. Their experiences were well summarized by Kuan in his writing,

The major cities are centres of commerce filled with department stores and strong **western influence**. However as we ventured further away from this city and entered the rural areas, it began to show that traditions and values were still kept **at heart**.

In his writing, Kuan saw the modern commercialized city as deviation from the Chinese traditions under western influence, and a superficial appearance that wrapped around the core values. As much as many participants celebrated the rapid economic development of China as shown in previous sections, the imagined China that they would identify with was still exotic, romanticised and less developed, echoing discourses in western society that have often been criticised as 'orientalism' (Said, 1978). Like orientalism, the image of China that these young people constructed was based on the differences between the 'familiar' (their lives in Britain) and the 'other' in the east. Moreover, they showed a sense of loss and nostalgia for the changed or changing Chinese society. Lanke's (girl, aged 13) photographs (see Figure 24), taken on the train from Shanghai to Hangzhou, showed endless building sites and construction projects along the railway line. She felt very disappointed that apart from the tourist sites, traditional Chinese architecture and gardens were also diminishing in rural areas.





**Figure 24:** 在火车上 On the train, by Lanke (girl, aged 13).

Apart from architecture and landscape, this theme also ran through the representations of Chinese art and crafts, cultural activities and fashion. As Kuan observed in his photographs (see Appendix 13), the traditional drum dance became a commercialized marketing event for the silk shop (slide 7) and a traditional decorative pattern was recreated on modern stainless-steel compact mirrors (slide 8). In addition, the western fashion magazines *Elle* and *Femina*, aimed at a young audience in the Chinese fashion market, chose Chinese celebrities in western branded dresses for their front covers and discussed topics such as how to become ‘hot girls’, luxury travels and sex (slide 9). Moreover, modernized Chinese-style dresses were displayed on western models (slide 11) and a Chinese wedding bed was decorated with traditional Chinese red bedding but featured ‘two teddy bears wrapped in plastic bags’ (Kuan, see slide 16). But the hybridity was often despised and criticized by these young people, as Kuan noted,

I hate to see Chinese people desperately trying to adopt the western civilisation culture into their urban areas... but these are not direct copies, for the Chinese have innovated and twisted businesses towards Chinese tastes.

The tendency to prefer a 'pure' and 'authentic' view of 'China and the Chinese' over a hybrid and changing reality were manifested not only in discussions of TV and visual representations but also in young people's ways of learning Chinese language and Chinese culture (see section 9.3).

Given that many agreed that pollution was a big problem in China in the questionnaire survey and interviews (see Section 6.2), only one photograph, taken by Sophia, reflected the poor air quality in Beijing (see Figure 25). She was very excited for it was her first visit to Beijing and she was keen to see its famous historic and cultural sites, such as the Great Wall of China, the Summer Palace and the Olympic Park. But her experiences of these places were not as nice as the pictures that she selected in Stage 1 of the workshop suggested. The days she stayed in Beijing were shrouded in fog and haze. She was very disappointed and blamed it all on industrialization.





**Figure 25: The Great Pollution of China, by Sophia (aged 15)**

On this trip, the young people experienced the impact of modernization and globalization in China. On the one hand, they were amazed by and also proud of the speed of development in China. The perception of China as a strong country provides increasing cultural capital for them as ethnic Chinese in Britain. On the other hand, they felt disappointed by the global influences over China, and still hoped the 'differences' from western societies, such as traditional values, the 'purity' and 'authenticity' of Chinese culture would remain intact. In this sense, they not only position themselves as outsiders from China and Chinese culture, but also as members of a diaspora, who returned and found their imagined homeland unrecognisable.

## ***Theme 2: People under change***

This theme represents how the participants saw the impact of globalization on the lives of Chinese people. As Kuan observed from fashion trends, the growing urban middle class was trying to 'westernise' their lifestyle. Lu, on the other hand, turned her camera to the working class, who were often invisible in the flourishing Shanghai city.



**Figure 26: 辛勤工作的清洁工 A hard working Cleaner, by Lu**

Lu took Figure 26 when she and her family were enjoying a night out in the busiest and most affluent street along the Huangpu River in Shanghai. It was around 10pm when she saw the street cleaner sweeping the street, picking up rubbish and pushing the bin. 'I decided to take the photograph because I felt really bad when I saw him working so late while everyone else was having a great time', said Lu. One can only imagine the heavy workload of this street cleaner with such a crowd in the street every night. This photograph enabled Lu to express her personal and emotional feelings about street workers. But what was more revealing is the conversation triggered by this photograph.

Kuan: That's capitalism. China's communism is not actually communism any more.

Ming: Yes, it is.

Kuan: No it is not, China is more capitalist than capitalist countries, business in China is all capitalism, people are money driven and cheap labour get exploited.

It is hard to tell whether the street cleaner was being exploited or just doing his normal night shift. But it is interesting to observe how Kuan and Ming connected this incident to the economic and political system of China. Earlier discussion has shown that most British Chinese young people in this study were aware that China is a communist state and tended to maintain a neutral stance when asked to comment on its political system, which is often criticized by the British media (see Sections 6.2 and 6.3). But unlike their ambivalent political descriptions of China, in this case, they thought the reason for China's fast development is its adoption and over-exercise of capitalism. Capitalism had a negative connotation as it resulted in exploitation of cheap labour. But at the same time, as Ming later argued, China is still a country governed by the communist party with negative aspects such as corruption and tight control over speech freedom. These young participants may not have even fully understood what the terms 'capitalism' and 'communism' meant, but their discussions in making sense of their experiences in China often echoed discourses in British media as discussed in Section 6.3.

Compared to people living in the city, these participants were more fascinated by those who engaged in Chinese folk art forms and maintained traditional lifestyles. Kelan took Figure 27 when she and her group were visiting a park in Hangzhou.



**Figure 27: 画素描的老人 An old man and his sketch, in Hangzhou, by Kelan**

It was a very hot and humid day, but the old man in the photograph had been drawing under the sun for several hours, as he told them he had done on the same spot almost every day since he retired. Although he had not had the opportunity to receive proper training in drawing when he was young, now he could finally pursue his passion for drawing classical Chinese architecture. ‘I almost cried when he said that, that’s when I decided to take the photo’ said Kelan. The elderly man in the photograph also explained to them the beauty and hidden meanings of Chinese gardens and told them several legends about the park they were visiting. However, not everyone in the group fully understood his stories, owing to the fact that their standard of Chinese, which had previously allowed them to communicate on the trip, ‘was certainly not up to scratch’ to follow the elderly man’s narrative. ‘It’s a shame, I wished my Chinese were better’, said Johanna, who often struggled to find motivation to learn Chinese. The transnational experiences of the participants provided them with the motivation to learn ‘Chinese’ not just as a signifier of their identity ascribed from the past, or as cultural capital in preparation to realize



social mobility in the future (for further discussion see Chapter 9), but in order to understand the people and the place they encounter in the present.

Just as they preferred to represent China by its historical towns, classical gardens and traditional cultural activities, these young people were most interested in people who were loyal to traditional ways of life, such as the ferrymen, the drum dancer, the cook of the 'long life one noodle' (Kuan's photograph slide 6, 7 and 15 in Appendix) and fisherman who used birds to catch river fish (see figure 28). It is worth noting that none of them took photos of local Chinese people of their age as part of their representations of the Chinese.



**Figure 28: Fishing with birds, in Tongli, Suzhou, by Johanna**

### **Theme 3: We are all a family.**

This theme was mainly represented by two categories of photographs. The first category included photographs taken at the Shanghai Exposition, in which 246 countries and international organisations have participated in recent years. As Kuan showed in his photographs taken at the Exposition (slide 2 in Appendix 13), it represented the idea of 'global village'. He took the

photograph shown in slide 3 because he thought it best represented the theme of the Shanghai Exposition:

It [the exposition] is about people, the mascot is actually the Chinese character ‘人’ [people]... We are all connected to each other.

If Kuan’s photograph represented people across the globe as one family, Johanna and three others emphasised their deep connections with Britain. Although they took photographs of different pavilions, they only chose photographs of the UK pavilion and China pavilions for the final exhibition. Many participants thought the UK pavilion represented who they were because ‘we (they) are **from** Britain’ (Lu). ‘I think the UK pavilion is the best’, Johanna commented proudly, showing her photograph of the UK pavilion stamp on her hand (Figure 29). Identifying that British food bears the taste of home (see Section 6.2.3) and describing Britain as their home country, these young people’s self-identification with Britain was celebrated and strengthened in their trip to seek their familial, ethnic and cultural roots. This identification with Britain was not, however, exclusive and was juxtaposed with their identifications as members of the Chinese diaspora, as shown above.



**Figure 29: UK pavilion, Shanghai Expo, by Johanna**

The second category in this theme was depicted in Sophia's (aged 15) photograph showing the overseas Chinese around the world represented as one big family, or diaspora. She was one of the few who followed the summer camp trip all the way to Beijing. Figure 30 was taken when she was waiting to enter the Great Hall of the People in Tian'anmen Square for the ceremony of the Beijing summer camp. Although all the participants had been to China on more than three occasions, visiting with other overseas Chinese on the summer camp provided a markedly different experience. In their previous visits, their main activities revolved around visiting their families. But in the summer camp, their activities included sightseeing, Chinese cultural knowledge sessions and interactive activities with other group members. 'It is very exciting to know there are so many people like me, Chinese living outside of China', said Sophia. Some of them formed close friendships after eating, sleeping, socialising and travelling with each other during this journey (see Kuan's photograph slide 19). As ethnic minorities in Britain, many of them were often the only Chinese in their year in their mainstream school. Going to Chinese schools helped them connect with other British Chinese young



people in the UK and this summer camp enabled them to locate themselves within the global diaspora of Chinese young people.



**Figure 30: Sea of yellow, by Sophia**

### **Project based in Britain**

The projects created by Yunke (girl, aged 14) and Denise (aged 13) were based in Britain. Both participants dedicated the majority of their photographs to symbolic Chinese objects in their homes, such as Chinese calligraphy, paintings and ornaments hanging in their house, chopsticks, Chinese porcelain figurines and Chinese instruments (see Yunke's photographs, slides 2 to 11). To Yunke and Denise, home provided the richest and the most convenient resources when they tried to visually represent Chineseness in their lives. Being surrounded by these symbolic objects in their homes, they did not pay much attention to these objects until they took on this project. In the process of searching for 'Chineseness' at home, they started to ask their parents questions and discover the meanings of these symbolic objects. Yunke had never imagined that there could be such an amazing legend behind the porcelain figurine of 'Heroine Mu' (see Yunke's photograph in slide



7) on the shelf she saw every day. She also finally understood why her mother always hung a red fish on the ceiling of their living room: the sound of ‘fish’ [鱼, yú] in Chinese is the same as ‘surplus’ [余, yú], thus fish was a lucky sign of financial prosperity for the household.

The second theme of their photographs was food and food-related activities, such as the traditional food, ‘粽子’,<sup>28</sup> dumplings, and the process of making it (see Yunke’s photograph slides 12 to 13). Yunke and her sister were taught to make Chinese food from a young age. Eating and making Chinese meals is an integral part of their lives. Denise, on the other hand, loved baking traditional British recipes, such as biscuits, sponge cakes and mince pies for her family. In her photograph (Figure 31), her home-made gingerbread men were decorated in writing icing with colourful Chinese characters. She made this as a welcome gift when her grandmother came to visit them from China. The meanings of these characters were: ‘love’ (top middle character), ‘Grandma, we welcome you’ (five characters in the middle line), ‘happiness’ (bottom left) and ‘good fortune’ (bottom right). Her writing of Chinese characters and arrangement of the biscuits showed that she had a good knowledge of Chinese language and cultural traditions. For example, she used the honorific ‘您’ (you) to address her grandmother. She deliberately wrote the character ‘福’ (good fortune) upside down, because in Chinese the character for ‘upside-down’, [倒, dào], is a homonym of the character for ‘to arrive’, [到, dào]. The cookie with an upside down ‘福’ signified ‘good fortune is arriving’.



**Figure 31: Welcome cookies for grandma, by Denise (aged 13)**

While her mother and big sister were good at cooking Chinese food, Denise was the only member of the family who loved baking. Baking British cakes and biscuits in a Chinese household allowed her to contribute something different to the family's daily meals. She also took her biscuits decorated with the iced Chinese characters to school and her friends' parties. These British-Chinese biscuits enabled her to be 'special' among her friends, to whom she could explain the meanings and stories behind her creation.

The third theme was devoted to Chinese people in Britain. Both participants took photographs of their family members as representations of Chinese. Denise took a photograph of her mother putting on makeup before going to work every morning. Yunke took a photograph of her sister learning to make dumplings, and another photograph of her father giving a keynote speech at the annual meeting of Chinese Life Scientists Society in the UK (see Yunke's photograph slides 13 and 14).

As stated in Chapter 5, the projects created by Yunke and Denise in Britain

were not as informative or illuminating as those who joined the summer camp in terms of understanding their perceptions of 'China/Chinese' and their identities. It may be because they took photographs based on convenience rather than planning, but it also reflected the fact that the 'Chineseness' they experience every day is limited to their homes and primarily derived from their family members. In their daily lives, they self-consciously select, mix and blend facets from both heritages into personalized but also collective and distinct ethnic representations.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has investigated British Chinese young people's perceptions and representations of 'China and the Chinese' through verbal descriptions, discussions of media representations and visual representations. Data collected from a questionnaire survey, the individual and group interviews and the participatory photography workshop were integrated in order to understand British Chinese young people's portrayal of 'China and the Chinese', and further reflect on the influence of these perceptions on their everyday lives and cultural identities.

The quantitative data revealed that British Chinese young people largely agreed upon the descriptions of many aspects of 'China and the Chinese'. Behind the crude descriptions and figures, the qualitative data disclosed British Chinese young people's mixed and even contradictory emotions and perceptions of 'China and the Chinese'. Personal transnational experiences, British media discourses and parental influences all contributed to their perceptions. Indeed, many young people often referred to information learnt from British media in their descriptions of China/Chinese and in their opinions about their transnational experiences in China. However, when they were asked to comment on media criticism of China, they tended to defend China/Chinese as part of their identity. These media criticisms directed against the all-encompassing term 'Chinese' left most participants feeling frustrated and 'othered'. From fierce retaliation, ambivalence to agreement, their different reactions were constantly modified based on their age, the context and the power relations within the context. The fluidity of

interpretations was carried through their visual representations of 'China and the Chinese'. Their photographs represented a fast changing Chinese society under the impact of globalization. The participants applauded the development of China and the increasing interconnectedness between China and Britain, and other countries. But they also expressed their ideal Chinese culture as a fixed and static true essence that needed to be protected from 'westernisation' or globalization. Finally, the photography projects based in Britain demonstrated that, for these young people, 'Chineseness' was largely limited to their home settings. But it also showed that these young people not only actively brought about changes to existing family norms, but also blended aspects of 'Chineseness' in their integration into British society and thus constructed their unique cultural identities.

The findings provide answers to the first research question and have several implications in discussing the key concepts and theories reviewed previously. The significance of familial ethnic/cultural origin was explored through these young people's changing attitudes and self-positioning in relation to 'China and the Chinese'. It reflected the interculturality of their identities, in the sense that their cultural identities were constantly created and constructed through interactions with others, empowered and limited by the temporal and spatial positions of subject. Their ancestral past was reconstructed, understood and represented through the lens of the present. More specifically, these young participants generally generated more varied accounts about the place of their origin and the place of their residence when they were not tagged to any specific category of identities. When they subscribed to a fixed identity, either from media discourse, their parents or themselves, they were more likely to present polarized opinions, driven by fear and the frustration of being different and 'othered'.

The findings also reflected that these young people did not naturally have a diasporic consciousness, possess transnational ties or inherit a sense of belonging to the 'homeland' because of their ethnicity or family migratory backgrounds. On the contrary, the double consciousness of being both here and there was constructed through the present discourses in which they were

constantly reminded of being 'different' in Britain. Frequent visits to the place of their ethnic/cultural origins and on-going interactions with people living there provided primary transnational experiences, and to a certain extent cultivated attachment to their ancestral homeland. However, their imagined symbolic 'China and the Chinese' was formed and conditioned by the migratory history, changing discourses and distinct positioning of diasporic Chinese in Britain.

Having discussed British Chinese young people's relationship with their ethnic origins, the next three chapters discuss the current daily lives of these young people in Britain as media audiences and as pupils in mainstream and Chinese community language schools.

## **Chapter 7**

### **British Chinese Young People and Media**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

Owing to the paucity – even absence – of existing data, this chapter addresses the second research question by investigating how British Chinese young people consume media products and popular culture, especially ethnic Chinese media, in their everyday lives. The discussion draws upon data gathered from a questionnaire survey and interviews. The questionnaire was administered in 2011 to a representative sample of the target population of pupils attending London Chinese community language schools. The media environment of young people has been transformed during the five years between 2011 and 2016. At the time of the questionnaire, several established media and technology brands such as Facebook and YouTube were very popular among young people, while the emergent social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram, and digital streaming services of different TV channels, were then only beginning to attract young users. The iPhone (launched in 2007) and iPad (2010) were soon embedded in mainstream culture and changed access to and engagement with media (Lauricella et al., 2014). Thus, the questionnaire data was analysed with reference to Ofcom reports of children's media use and attitudes in the UK (Ofcom, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015) and the EU Kids Online project (Livingstone, Haddon, et al. 2014; Livingstone, Mascheroni, et al., 2014) to show the background and trends in the changing use of media by British youth over the last five years. Given the rate of change in this area it may be that this focus could become the source for another such study to register shifts in consumption and participation of online media.

#### **7.2 Ownership of Media Devices**

More than one third (41.6%) of the respondents to the questionnaire survey had a TV in their own room; 84.2% had their own personal computer (PC) or laptop; 66.3% owned a games console, 82.2% owned Mp3 players, and almost all of them (99.0%) had mobile phones. There was little gender difference in the ownership of TVs, PCs/laptops, games consoles and mobile

phones. Girls were more likely to have Mp3 players than boys. Children from poorer families (eligible for FSMs) were less likely to own PCs or laptops, Mp3 players and games consoles than those from richer families (not eligible for FSMs). Only 16.7% of the older participants (16-18s) claimed to have a TV in their bedroom, compared with nearly half (47.0%) of the 12-15s. However, older participants were more likely to own PCs, laptops, Mp3 players and games consoles than the younger participants.

The Ofcom reports of the media use and attitudes of 5-15 year-old children from 2011 to 2015 (Ofcom, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015) showed that nearly all (98.0%) had access to a television at home. About 90% of the children had internet access in their household. Among the 12-15s, the ownership of a television in their own bedroom decreased from 74% in 2011 to 60% in 2015. The ownership of PC/laptops in their bedrooms declined from 43% in 2011 to 34% in 2014. The ownership of a games console also declined drastically from 70% in 2011 to 46% in 2014. In comparison, among the 12-15s, smartphone ownership increased significantly from 41% in 2011 to 69% in 2014; and the ownership of a tablet computer increased drastically from 4% in 2011 to 45% in 2015. More importantly, children's ownership of smartphones and tablet computers is similar for any socio-economic group or gender group, compared to the average.

From the data in this questionnaire survey and other reports shown above, easy access to TVs and the internet (through PCs/laptops, mobile phones or tablets) was evident for nearly all young people in their homes in Britain. As a general trend, the ownership of internet-accessible media devices among young people was increasing compared to that of traditional media such as TV and non-smart phones. British Chinese young people in this study were far more likely to have their own PC/laptop in their bedroom (84.2%) than the average British young person (41.6%), and less likely to have TVs in their bedroom (41.6% for British Chinese participants, 74% for British average in 2011 when the questionnaire survey was completed). In 2011, media researchers (Rideout, Lauricella, & Wartella, 2011) in the US conducted a survey with 2,002 eight to eighteen-year-old young people. They also noticed

that Asian young people were far more likely to have a computer in their bedroom than other young people (55% of Asians, compared with 34% of Blacks and 32% of Whites).

### 7.3 Use of Media Devices

In the questionnaire survey for this study, British Chinese young people's use of different media was measured by asking the number of hours per week participants spent on different media in the previous month. The sample mean was firstly calculated from the reported amount of time spent on each device. However, some cases were outliers that strongly skewed the mean value and affected the accuracy of the data analysis. For example, three participants wrote down '24/7' for the amount of time used on mobile phones. It was not sensible to take the face value of 168 hours per week (HPW) as the time spent on mobile phones. Their answers merely suggested that they used their phone very frequently. These outliers were considered legitimate outliers that were meaningful for data analysis because they were not produced by sampling or measurement error. Therefore, I decided to use the Winsorization method (Reifman & Keyton, 2010) to deal with the outliers. I transformed a small number of outliers (less than 5% of the sample would not affect the validity of the analysis) with the next highest/lowest score that is not an outlier in the sample.

	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	95% CI
<b>PCs/laptops</b>	20.93	16.0	18.26	(17.33, 24.54)
<b>Mobile phones</b>	9.47	2.0	20.76	(5.37, 13.56)
<b>TV</b>	6.88	5.0	6.97	(5.50, 8.26)
<b>Mp3 players</b>	4.40	2.0	5.20	(3.38, 5.43)
<b>Print media</b>	3.66	3.0	3.24	(3.02, 4.30)
<b>Radio</b>	1.38	0.5	1.92	(1.00, 1.76)
<b>Games consoles</b>	1.23	0.0	1.85	(0.87, 1.60)
<b>CDs and DVDs</b>	0.68	0.0	1.06	(0.47, 0.89)

**Table 6: Weekly hours of media consumption among British Chinese pupils (2011)**



Table 6 showed that on average the participants in this sample spent most time on PCs/laptops (20.93 HPW), followed by mobile phones (9.47 HPW) and TV (6.88 HPW). The time spent on PCs/laptops was more than three times longer than on TV. But the standard deviations of the average time spent on PCs/laptops and mobile phones were high, which meant the amount of time spent on these two types of media varied widely among participants. With the information from this sample, one can be 95% confident that the population mean lies in the interval calculated and listed in the last column of Table 6.

In this survey, boys tended to watch more TV and play on games consoles more than girls, whereas girls spent more time than boys on any other media, especially on mobile phones (nearly twice as much as boys) (see Figure 36 in Appendix). Except for CDs/DVDs, older children (16-18) spent considerably more time than younger children (12-15) on all media, especially TV, PCs/laptops and mobile phones (see Figure 37 in Appendix). Participants from poorer families (eligible for FSMs) spent more time on mobile phones, CDs/DVDs and computers/laptops than those from richer families (not eligible for FSMs). Participants from richer families spent almost twice as much time on TV as their poorer counterparts (see Figure 38 in Appendix). Participants who did not speak English at home consumed less TV and spent less time on mobile phones than those who spoke English at home. But the use of English at home did not have a significant influence on time spent on other media (see Figure 39 in Appendix). In later stage individual interviews, the majority of the interviewees reported that they rarely watched TV by themselves and television-viewing was a family media activity. The English language deficiency of some British Chinese parents limited the shared TV watching experiences among family members (see Section 7.5).

The Ofcom reports from 2011 to 2015 showed that among 12-15s in the UK, the estimated time spent watching television has decreased from 17.6 to 15.5 HPW, but time spent online has increased, from 14.9 HPW to 18.9 HPW. Children from higher socio-economic backgrounds spent less time on TV and on the internet than those with a lower socio-economic status. Boys tended to

spend more time gaming than girls, but girls made more calls and sent more messages using their mobile phones than boys. While the PC/laptop was still the main device for accessing the internet (62%), 45% of children used tablets to go online in 2015, nine times as many as in 2011 (5%). In the report of their research project, EU Kids Online, Livingstone and colleagues (2014) also found that in the UK, smartphones were more popular than laptops (used daily by 56% and 47% of 9- to 16-year-olds).

Comparing the results of this survey and Ofcom reports in 2011, British Chinese young people (20.93HPW) spent more time on PCs/laptops than British young people on average (14.9 HPW), and less time on other media devices. A similar tendency was also found in the US context (Rideout et al., 2011) where Asian youth were especially drawn to computers, spending nearly three hours a day more in recreational computer use than average American young people. Asian youths spent most time, almost three times more than White Americans, on mobile phones.

Furthermore, in this study, many interviewees reported that they preferred using PCs/laptops to watching TV because they had more control over their PCs/laptops, even when parents restricted their use. With the increase in use of internet-accessible mobile devices, a pressing issue I noticed from my fieldwork was that some British Chinese parents did not have the language ability or IT knowledge to operate computers, set up an internet connection, or exercise parental control over their children's internet use. David (aged 18) had been managing computers and internet-related matters at home since he was twelve. His parents spoke little English and they had never used computers. David decided which broadband package to sign up to, which computers to buy, when to switch on the internet connection and he set the password for the Wi-Fi connection. Three of my interviewees' parents were like David's, relying on their children to use computers and the internet. During several home visits to Jake's (aged 16) house, I noticed that Jake's eight-year-old brother was watching videos on YouTube with a great deal of swearing and violence. Jake's parents were not even aware of the situation until I notified them. They had to rely on Jake to set up parental control on his

brother's tablet. These incidents reflected the potential problems and risks of the internet for young people in British Chinese households when the deficiency of parents' language skills and media literacy meant they failed to monitor and support their children who were exposed to online risks. In the past decades, an increasing body of research on the risks of the internet for young people has identified the risk and harm in the changing practices and patterns of online use among young people (Livingstone, Mascheroni, et al., 2014; Vandoninck, d'Haenens, & Smahel, 2014). Parental support has been identified as one of the most important and effective mediation strategies for reducing online risks and harms for young people. But the generation gap in digital media expertise between parents and children may hinder the effective parental mediation and support, especially among immigrant families (Livingstone, Mascheroni, et al., 2015). These concerns were reflected in this study. Future research and more support were needed to increase the parental competence and confidence in media use and improve safety of media environment in migrant families. The next two sections focus on the use of the two most important media, internet and television, among British Chinese young people.

#### **7.4 Online activities**

In the questionnaire survey, participants were asked to rank the top ten out of eighteen online activities they did most frequently in the previous month. The eighteen activities included in the questionnaire were grouped into nine sub-categories.<sup>29</sup> For each participant, the first ten ranked activities were coded by numbers 1 to 10, and those activities ranked out of the top ten were coded as '11'. Then, the results were grouped and compared by calculating the means of the coded values of each activity. The smaller the mean value, the higher the average ranking. The top five online activities ranked by participants were:

1. Visiting social networking sites (SNSs)
2. Online video viewing
3. Information searching
4. Homework
5. Online gaming

Girls were more likely than boys to use SNSs, watch online videos and research online for homework, whereas boys were more likely than girls to play online games and carry out general research online. Older participants (aged 16-18) researched information online more frequently than younger participants (aged 12-15) either for schoolwork or for leisure, whereas younger participants were more likely to use SNSs than their older counterparts. Participants from poorer backgrounds were less likely to watch videos and research information online for schoolwork and for leisure than participants from richer backgrounds, but there was no significant variation with regard to online gaming and social networking among participants of different socio-economic backgrounds. Participants who spoke English at home tended to use more SNSs and research websites, but they watched fewer online TV programmes and films than those who did not speak English at home.

The results in this study corresponded with the findings from studies elsewhere. In the 2011 Ofcom report the top five internet activities among 12-15s were: schoolwork (92%), general browsing (82%), SNSs (78%), communication (emails 68% and instant messaging 64%) and online gaming (66%). From 2011 to 2014, nearly 96% of 12-15s with a social media profile were Facebook users. Livingstone, Haddon and colleagues (2014) reported that the most popular online activities for 9-15 year-old British young people were watching video clips, social networking and listening to music. Ofcom reports from various years also stated that girls were more likely to use SNSs and online forms of communication than boys, and boys were more likely to play games online than girls.

#### **7.4.1 Social networking sites**

Like other British youths, the most popular online activity among British Chinese young people was interacting with friends on SNSs. Given the popularity of SNSs, interestingly none of the individual interview participants in this study had joined the online communities [www.BritishChineseOnline.com](http://www.BritishChineseOnline.com) or [www.dimsum.co.uk](http://www.dimsum.co.uk) that have elsewhere been argued as indicative of the formation of a collective British Chinese identity (Parker & Song, 2007).

Data gathered from interviews confirmed the popularity of SNSs, especially Facebook. As Min (girl, aged 15) described, visiting Facebook had become her 'everyday ritual'. The extent of using SNSs varied among interviewees, but their purposes for using SNSs were mostly similar, namely to maintain existing relationships. As explained by B1-GE (boy, aged 14), 'the essence of using Facebook is to stalk people'. Although some of them were not active contributors on SNSs, frequent visits to other people's SNSs profiles helped them stay up to date in their real-life circle of friends and satisfy a need for peer approval and attention. This finding was in line with other studies of young people's online social networking behaviours (Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Joinson, 2008; Mazman & Usluel, 2011).

Although SNSs were the most popular online activity among questionnaire survey participants, especially girls, attitudes towards this were not always positive in individual interviews. Five young people (two girls and three boys) strongly expressed their concerns about the risks of using SNSs. They did not use Facebook because they were concerned about predatory paedophiles abusing children online, cyber-bullying and internet-related addictive behaviours. A few participants also questioned the meaning of 'social' on SNSs. As Zhengyi (boy, aged 15) said, 'Facebook is supposed to be a social website. But not really if you are gonna spend ages on it, not talking to anyone else'. Ying (girl, aged 18), who used to be a heavy user of Facebook, later boycotted the site. Her friends had to call or text in order to contact her. In her mind, online social interaction was superficial and meaningless because '真的朋友不需要 Facebook (true friends do not need Facebook)'.

The use of SNSs by participants in this study was motivated and guided by their peer social group. They were indistinguishable from majority British young people in terms of their purposes for and patterns of using SNSs. At their stage in life, in which peer acceptance is important, some of these young people were particularly reflective and conscious of their use of SNSs. From their awareness of and concerns about young people's media use, some managed to actively regulate their communication behaviours. Given that

British Chinese young people tended to spend more time online than the majority of British young people, there was no evidence indicating that they were more active in using SNSs.

#### **7.4.2 Online games**

Playing games, particularly for boys in this study, was another important way to make new friends and interact with existing friends. But to some British Chinese boys who had difficulties interacting with schoolmates in real life owing to their lack of English language or social skills, online gaming became an important way to compensate for their lack of friendship in real life. When Joseph (boy, aged 18) came to London ten years ago, he struggled to make any friends at school because he could barely speak English. His classmates always made fun of his accent, which made him even more nervous to communicate, let alone make any friends. Instead, he turned to online gaming, where, in his words, 'no one knows who you are and how you speak'. To win these games required not only gaming skills but also efficient communication with team members. Eager to win, he managed to overcome the language barrier and social nervousness through observation and practice playing games. Two years later, he became the leader of a group of twenty followers in the multi-player game *World of Warcraft*.<sup>30</sup> He devised gaming strategies, allocated equipment and personnel and commanded team members through voice/text chat tools during live combat in the game. 'I've learnt more English in games than in school', he said proudly. Still, despite gaining language and social confidence, he had only one friend at school who was one of his gaming partners. Even so, he expressed that he had 'no intentions of making any more friends' at school because of his previous unpleasant experiences. For Joseph, online gaming provided social interactions that he was lacking in real life and, in turn, helped him earn the peer respect that he was unable to gain at school. British Chinese young people like Joseph sought online social activities to compensate for the social anxiety or ethnic social exclusion they faced in real life. A direction for future studies is to explore the practice, risks, and safety issues of the online use of young people in migrant families.

## 7.5 TV viewing

### 7.5.1 TV preferences

In the questionnaire survey, participants were asked to rank their favourite five out of twenty types of TV programmes during the previous month. For each participant, their favourite five programmes were coded from numbers 1 to 5 according to their rank and TV programmes ranked lower than the top 5 were coded as '6'. Then, the results were compared by calculating the means of the recorded values for each TV programme: the smaller the mean value, the higher the average ranking. Their five favourite types of TV programmes were:

1. Film
2. Drama
3. Animation
4. Comedy
5. Music

In this questionnaire survey, boys were more likely than girls to watch films shown on TV, whereas girls were more likely than boys to watch drama series and music programmes. There was little variation according to gender in terms of preferences for watching animations and comedy. Younger participants (12-15) were more likely to watch drama series and music programmes than older participants (16-18). There was little variation in their TV preferences according to whether or not they spoke English at home.

Participants were also asked to list the names of their five favourite TV programmes. In total 80 participants nominated 150 TV programmes. The most popular are listed below with the number of votes in brackets,

1. *X Factor* (25)
2. *Doctor Who* (16)
3. *Friends* (11)
4. *The Simpsons* (9)
5. *Merlin, Glee, Eastenders, Britain's Got Talent, Ugly Betty* (8)

Out of the nine most popular TV programmes, six were drama series (*Doctor Who* is science fiction drama; *Merlin* is fantasy drama; *Friends*, *Ugly Betty* and *Glee* are comedy dramas; *Eastenders* is a soap opera), two were reality talent shows (*X Factor* and *Britain's Got Talent*) and one was animation (*The Simpsons*). This showed that the young people in this study had a strong preference for narrative-based TV programmes (films, drama, animation and comedy). But according to most of my interviewees, when they watched TV with their parents, reality shows such as *X Factor* and *Britain's Got Talent* were more popular than British TV dramas, especially in families in which both parents were ethnic Chinese. This was because watching these reality talent shows did not require as advanced English language skills and cultural knowledge as watching English dramas or films. As Yunke (girl, aged 14) explained,

*Britain's Got Talent*, sometimes we will watch at home because it's like they don't speak much, they dance or sing or act.

Yunke's parents were born in China and migrated to Britain as professionals in the late 1990s. They both spoke fluent English but they preferred watching Chinese dramas/films over English ones because, as Yunke's father said, Chinese dramas portrayed more agreeable and '贴切的 intimate' lifestyles and cultural values that appealed to them. Reality talent shows that conveyed fewer cultural differences were more likely to entertain all members of British Chinese families.

As shown in Section 7.3, young people in Britain generally spent more time on the internet than watching TV. But watching TV programmes via the internet is one of their favourite online activities. A significant number of interviewees (24 out of 29) reported that they had actively searched for and watched media products from other countries such as Chinese shows, Korean dramas and Japanese animations online, often by themselves. The following section discusses the influence of mediated East Asian popular culture in the lives of these young people.



### **7.5.2 Southeast Asian youth culture: ‘cool’ Japan and Korean Wave**

The ‘Japanese cultural boom’ in the form of video games, comics, animation, fashion, TV dramas, pop music and Karaoke started in the East Asian regions in the 1980s, then spread to the rest of the world. These Japanese cultural products and content together form the image of ‘cool Japan’ on the global pop culture stage (Brienza, 2014). Japanese animation (J-animation) is one form of Japanese pop culture that has achieved globalization and counterbalances the hegemony of American animation in the world (Ng, 2001; Iwabuchi, 2002). In East Asia, Hong Kong and Taiwan have become consumption centres and disseminators of Japanese comics (‘manga’) and animations, which also have a strong impact on Asian popular culture and the entertainment industry. One of the most salient impacts is the trend for adapting Japanese comics or animation into live-action Hong Kong and Taiwan TV series or movies (Ng, 2002). These localized Chinese TV series later generated enthusiastic responses from young Chinese fans and became one of the leading forces in Chinese TV production and popular culture. Even in the US and Europe, an increasing number of young people have become fans of J-animations. In spite of cultural and language differences, Japanese cultural products, especially comics and animations, have grown so rapidly in international markets that they have even triggered reactions such as ‘Manga conquers America’ and ‘Japanization of Asia’ (Ng, 2001; Brienza, 2014).

Almost one decade after the boom of ‘cool’ Japanese products, an increasing amount of South Korean popular culture in the form of TV dramas, films, pop songs and celebrities has gained immense popularity in Southeast Asian countries and overseas Asian communities (Jung, 2009). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, South Korea emerged as Asia’s leader in pop culture. This rapid spread of Korean popular culture, led by exporting TV dramas to the rest of the world, was known as the ‘Korean wave’ (Ryoo, 2009). It has been noticed that the Korean wave has reached the shores of America, creating an increasing number of vocal and devoted fans of Korean TV dramas (K-dramas) in major American-Asian communities (Jung, 2009).

There is limited mainstream broadcasting of Japanese and Korean TV products in Britain. But the recent developments in internet and digital media equipped these J-animations and K-dramas with various subtitle options in different languages, making them more accessible to wider audiences. However, only recently scholars start to investigate the consumption and perceptions of Japanese and Korean cultural products among British young people (Mau, 2013, Tan 2013, Yeh, 2014).

Interviewees in this study acknowledged the influence of the mediated East Asian pop cultural products on their viewing. In every Chinese school classroom I observed, I encountered several J-animation and/or K-drama fans. Fifteen of my twenty-nine interviewees claimed that they liked watching J-animations and/or K-dramas. Gender difference was salient in preference for viewing K-dramas (nine girls and two boys) but not so in watching Japanese animations (five girls and four boys). They mainly researched and watched these TV series online based on recommendations from their friends who shared a similar interest (mostly British Chinese peers, relatives and friends in China). To some British Chinese young people, J-animations and/or K-dramas had acquired an equally (if not more) important role as American animations and British/American dramas in their TV viewing habits.

The dissemination of the Korean wave in Asia was often attributed to 'cultural proximity' by many scholars, as Korea and other Asian societies share important cultural values (Aoyagi, 2000; Shiraishi, 2000; Iwabuchi, 2002). J-animation and K-dramas conveyed certain traditional Asian cultural values and aesthetics that were particularly appealing to British Chinese young people in the global media market. The data from this study, however, suggest that what really attracted the participants was the hybridity of Asian youth culture and the high quality of modern media production.

Particularly targeted at young audiences, K-dramas were often based on the themes of love and youth. As David (aged 18) said, 'There's only one type of Korean drama. They are all romance'. With good-looking Korean actors, contemporary and glamorous fashion, make-up, and hairstyles, melodramatic

storylines, beautiful cinematography and lavish production, K-dramas won the hearts of many young people, especially girls. Apart from the popular production patterns, girls like Ann (aged 14) watched K-dramas in order to follow the latest trends in fashion, make-up and hairstyles in Asia. 'Asian style is more suitable for me.' said Ann. For some participants, it was also about seeking visibility and multiple representations of Asians in the media. As Simon (aged 14) complained,

I don't like English TV programmes. 'Cause there are limited channels, there are only five main ones unless you have Sky... you don't see many Chinese faces on TV.

Almost all participants were aware of the popularity of K-dramas even though not everyone liked them. Girls like Min (girl, aged 15) and Ying (girl, aged 18) did not like K-dramas precisely because they were 'pretty much the same storyline' (Ying) and they feature 'unnaturally good-looking main characters' (Min).

In comparison, J-animations go beyond Asian communities and have a wider audience in both America and Europe. The reasons for the popularity of J-animations among overseas young people has been summarized by several researchers: J-animation represents Japanese youth culture with high quality production (Poon, 2001); the contents of J-animation are complex and diverse enough to cater for different age groups (Napier, 2001); and J-animation possesses an aesthetic that is different from western standards (Napier, 2001, p. 251). My discussions with British Chinese young people supported the arguments above. Apart from appreciating the content of J-animations, serious fans like Kuan (boy, aged 17) paid more attention to the unique drawing skills and animation techniques in J-animation. Inspired by different styles of J-animation and animated games, he used his computer to draw and design his own animated characters. He even set his sights on a future career as an animated game designer. The J-animation fans in this study also extended their love to all kinds of Japanese cultural products such as comics, music and drama shows. It is interesting that although Japanese cultural

products faced resistance and even resentment in China because of the painful colonial history of China under Japan, such patriotic feelings were never mentioned by any of the British Chinese interviewees, regardless of whether they liked or disliked J-animations. Instead, five of them complained about the repetitive and superfluous Chinese anti-Japanese dramas:

Chinese TV series are always about two things; it is either always about Chinese royal families, or about battles between China and Japan in the Second World War.

(Gang, boy, aged 16)

As the impact of East Asian cultural waves on mainstream British society is increasingly noticeable (for instance through J-animation, J-animated video-games, and Korean music such as the global hit '*Gangnam Style*<sup>31</sup>'), their influence on the everyday lives of British Chinese young people cannot be ignored or dismissed. These British Chinese fans went to Korean and/or Japanese restaurants, made sushi for their packed lunches, learnt Korean and/or Japanese languages, had the same hairstyles as the actors and actresses, and even dreamed of 'living in Japan for a year or so to experience the culture' (Julia, aged 17). Their interest in East Asian youth culture connected them to Chinese and East Asian young people who shared a similar interest.

In addition, the Japanese and Korean-centred East Asian popular culture in turn influenced and transformed media production and youth culture in China. Most studies in the field of media and migration focus on the influences of either mainstream media or ethnic media among migrants and the subsequent generation youth. But the findings above reflect the hybrid nature of mediated cultural products and acknowledge other possible globalized and transnational media flows that influence young people in a global era. Future research is needed to further explore the influence of pan-Asian youth culture on British Chinese young people.

## **7.6 Ethnic Chinese media and cultural identities**

In his study of British Chinese young people in the 1990s, Parker (1995) emphasised the important role of Hong Kong popular culture transmitted through Chinese films and soap operas in the everyday lives of these young people. Chinese videotapes and music cassettes rented or bought from Chinatown and circulated among Chinese families provided a key source of family entertainment and a major resource for young people to learn Cantonese, to understand the culture and lives of their relatives in China, and to construct their own cultural identities (Parker, 1995). Since then, the consumption of Chinese media products has changed dramatically with satellite TV and the internet and the development of media products with transnational themes and hybrid features.

### **7.6.1 Access and use of ethnic Chinese media**

Given that all the questionnaire survey participants were recruited through Chinese schools, it was surprising that almost one third (27.7%) of them did not use any Chinese media products. Gender, age, visits to China and language spoken at home did not influence this pattern of distribution strongly, but participants who were born in China (including Hong Kong and Macau, 88.2%) were more likely to watch Chinese TV/films than those who were born in the UK (69.6%) or other places in the world (60%). Participants from poorer families (76.9%) were more likely to watch Chinese TV products than those from richer families (70.9%).

For those who consumed Chinese media products, this survey also investigated their multiple forms of access. The primary means of accessing Chinese ethnic media was via the internet, with 50 out of 101 participants watching online and 31 of them downloading from the internet. The second source was satellite TV channels (chosen by 51 participants). Only 19 participants watched Chinese TV/films by renting/buying DVDs. Apart from these choices, the later in-depth interviews revealed another point of access to Chinese media products—Internet Protocol Television (IPTV). This allows international television services to be delivered directly from the source via internet streaming. More than half of the interviewees (16 out of 29) reported

having IPTV devices at home, through which they could access hundreds of TV channels from Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan.

Many interviewees (23 out of 29) in this study reported that Chinese satellite TV viewing was often a form of family entertainment and only a small number of them (4) watched Chinese satellite TV by themselves. But 24 out of 29 young interviewees claimed that they had actively searched for and watched Chinese media products online on their own. Young people like David (aged 18) and Jake (aged 16) even took responsibility for setting up Chinese IPTVs, searching and downloading Chinese TV programmes/films for their parents.

The average time the survey participants spent watching Chinese TV/films was 4.05 HPW (after 95% winsorization), with a relatively small standard deviation of 0.71 and the 95% confidence interval between 2.65 and 5.45 HPW. On average, boys (4.9 HPW) tended to watch more Chinese TV/films than girls (3.61 HPW). Contrary to their general TV viewing patterns, younger British Chinese children (4.36 HPW for 12-15s) on average spent almost double the amount of time watching Chinese TV/films compared to their older counterparts (2.58 HPW for 16-18s). Several individual interviewees aged 16-18 confirmed that they watched less Chinese TV than they used to. Participants from poorer families (5.27 HPW) on average tended to watch more Chinese TV/films than children from richer families (3.95 HPW). Children who spoke neither Mandarin nor Cantonese at home on average spent significantly less time (0.33 HPW) watching than those whose home language was Mandarin and/or Cantonese (4.41 HPW).

Participants from the questionnaire survey ranked their top five online activities related to China as follows:

1. Contact families in China (chosen by 51 out of 101 participants)
2. Watch Chinese TV/films online (50/101)
3. Learn Chinese (46/101)
4. Read news about China (32/101)
5. Download Chinese TV programmes/films (29/101)

The ranking indicated that participants' use of internet related to China was mainly receptive rather than creative. The purpose was mostly to maintain family ties, to be entertained and to learn Chinese language. Out of the 101 survey participants, only four reported that they had created and uploaded texts, pictures or videos related to China online; five had joined an online Chinese community. While the most popular online activities for these young participants was social networking, only a limited number of the interviewees (6 out of 29) had a profile with the largest Chinese online instant messenger service, QQ, which had 853 million active accounts by the end of 2015, just below Facebook and Whatsapp.<sup>32</sup> None of my interviewees participated in Chinese online forums or created personal webpages or blogs on Chinese SNSs. Internet use among migrants has been argued to enhance homeland media consumption, reproduce ethnic cultural practice, and strengthen the diasporic awareness and transnational ethnic identities of first generation migrants (T. Kang, 2009; Y. Kang & Yang, 2011; Kama & Malka, 2013). However, this study showed the limited use and influence of online SNSs related to their ethnic/cultural origin among British Chinese young people. This finding is supported by other studies which show that the understanding of identities and sense of belonging among second or subsequent generation migrants depends mainly on their real life experiences rather than online SNSs (Panagakos, 2003; Plaza, 2009; Metykova, 2010).

### **7.6.2 Chinese TV preferences**

Participants in the questionnaire survey were asked to list their five favourite Chinese TV programmes/films. In total, 52 participants nominated 70 Chinese TV programmes. The listed Chinese media products were TV dramas (35), films (18), reality game shows (5) and animations (5). The details of the nine most popular TV programmes are listed in Table 7:

Rank	Name	Votes	Year of Release	Genre	Language	Production
1	恶作剧之吻 <i>It started with a kiss</i>	7	2005	TV drama: romance, comedy	Mandarin	Taiwan, adapted from the Japanese Manga <i>Itazura na Kiss</i>
2	海派甜心 <i>Hi my sweetheart</i>	6	2006	TV drama: romance, comedy	Mandarin	Taiwan
3	命中注定我爱你 <i>Fated to love you</i>	5	2008	TV drama: romance, comedy	Mandarin	Taiwan
4	卧虎藏龙 <i>Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon,</i>	4	2000	Film: martial arts	Mandarin	American-Chinese-Hong Kong-Taiwanese co-production
	功夫 <i>Kung Fu Hustle</i>	4	2004	Film: martial arts, comedy	Cantonese	Hong Kong
	女拳 <i>Grace under fire</i>	4	2011	TV drama: martial arts	Cantonese	Hong Kong
	家有儿女 <i>Home with kids</i>	4	2004-2007	TV drama: comedy	Mandarin	Mainland China
	一起来看流星雨 <i>Let's watch the Meteor shower</i>	4	2009	TV drama: romance, comedy	Mandarin	Mainland China, adapted from Taiwanese TV drama <i>Meteor Garden</i> , based on the Japanese manga <i>Hana Yori Dango</i>
	还珠格格 <i>My fair princess</i>	4	1998, 2003	TV drama: romance, comedy	Mandarin	Mainland China and Taiwan coproduction, adapted from the Taiwanese novel <i>Princess Pearl</i>

**Table 7: Favourite Chinese TV programmes/films from the questionnaire survey in 2011**



The list above reveals that the themes of romance comedy (21) and martial arts (19) were particularly attractive to these participants. Half of the romance comedies were produced in Taiwan (11) and some of the most successful ones were adapted from Japanese manga stories (6). Taiwan has maintained a reputation for producing popular romance novels, dramas and films since the 1970s. Represented by the work of Qiong Yao, Taiwanese romance dramas/movies in the 1970s-1980s successfully created a shared 'imagined China and the Chineseness' and received massive popularity transcending the political and regional differences in various Chinese communities (Cheng, 2006). In the 1990s, Taiwanese romance drama was revived as they adapted Japanese manga stories and incorporated the successful production model of Korean dramas. These popular media products were examples of the hybrid transnational media market driven by commercial profit. These forms of Chinese popular culture creatively mix various successful media production models around the world with selective components from Chinese traditions to reproduce representations of the contemporary 'China and the Chinese'.

Another example of this mediated cultural reproduction is Chinese martial arts films and dramas. From the 1940s Hollywood martial art films by Bruce Lee to the 1980s Hong Kong action comedies starring Jacky Chan, until the more recent award-winning film *Crouching tiger, hidden dragon*, Kung Fu films and dramas as a genre have become the most prominent representation and unique hallmark of Chinese media products. As David (aged 18) said, 'there is no other film like Chinese martial arts films'. He was especially drawn to the '侠义精神 (traditional chivalrous spirit)' in Chinese martial arts period dramas and films. With plots and settings in Imperial China, many of the period dramas were not tied to specific places yet still created a specific Chineseness, and they have been successfully marketed to the global Chinese diaspora (Carstens, 2003). These martial arts dramas/films also inspired some British Chinese young people like David to join and commit to Kung Fu classes in their Chinese schools. Yet these young people's identifications with a shared imagined tradition may be insufficient, and sometimes even contradictory, in the formation of their identities as modern, cosmopolitan British Chinese young people. For example, the stereotypes of

young Chinese men as potent and dangerous ‘Kung Fu fighters’ have often been used in racial jokes and media representations to alienate British Chinese young people (Parker, 1998; Mau, 2014).

In the questionnaire survey, participants whose primary family language was Cantonese consumed more Hong Kong produced media products. Those who mainly spoke Mandarin often opted for media products produced in Taiwan or the Chinese mainland. The majority of the interviewees (25 out of 29) agreed that watching Chinese dramas/films helped them learn Chinese language (Cantonese or Mandarin) and Chinese culture. Some of them learnt ‘how people my (their) age live in China’ (Gabby, aged 15) from contemporary dramas. Some of them became attached to the ‘fantasy of martial arts’ and mythical Chinese super-heroes (Joseph, aged 18). However, learning Chinese language or culture was more of a by-product rather than the motive for consuming Chinese media products. Some participants steered away from Chinese media products precisely because of their limited language ability. As Namjyu (boy, aged 15) said,

I have no problem talking to my Mum in Mandarin. But the Mandarin dramas, they speak really quickly, and I just can’t understand it at all. I can’t read the subtitles as well.

Participants in the GN focus group discussion did not like Chinese dramas because they were ‘always about history’ (B2-GN), and they lacked the cultural/historical knowledge to understand them. In comparison with the popularity of J-animation and K-dramas, a few of the interviewees rejected Chinese media products because of their production quality. As Gang (boy, aged 17) said, ‘the acting was horrific, and the people who write the scripts are like cliché after cliché’. It was worth noting that most of the TV programmes listed above were produced four to ten years before the survey was conducted. The lack of updates with the Chinese media had led to some participants perceiving Chinese media products and popular culture as old-fashioned and of poor quality. I will discuss this further in Section 9.3.2.

As shown above, increasingly engaged with globalized media flows, British Chinese young audiences did not choose ethnic Chinese media products solely based on the proximity of language or cultural heritage but more on a particular genre or style of programmes that proved most attractive to them at that particular moment. While these young people could easily access a wide variety of Chinese media products from different sources, they also responded to them differently. Thus, there is not enough evidence in this study to suggest that the use of ethnic Chinese media was able to promote or encourage attachment to China and a unified Chinese identity.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

The findings above have provided an overview of the experiences of British Chinese young people as consumers of global media products and popular culture at the time when interviews took place. In terms of the use of mainstream media, British Chinese young people spent more time on the internet and less time watching TV than average British young people thus reflecting changing pattern of media engagement which have since intensified. But the ethno-cultural background of British Chinese young people did not entail significant differences in the use of various media compared to the majority British young people. In many cases, gender and age differences in media consumption were more significant than ethno-cultural differences. Many British Chinese young people in this study were particularly drawn to East Asian media products such as J-animation and K-dramas. Apart from cultural proximity, the reasons for the popularity of these media products were mainly the youth-orientated content and advanced media production. Two thirds of the questionnaire survey participants consumed Chinese media programmes, which were a hybrid of multiple transnational popular cultures. When satellite Chinese TV viewing was a family activity, many participants chose to watch Chinese media products alone via the internet. Consumption of Chinese TV products was limited, however, to romance comedies and martial arts action dramas/films. Although online social activities were very popular among British Chinese young people, few used Chinese online social tools or contributed to public online discussions.

In accordance with post-subcultural studies, the media use and preferences of these young British Chinese mainly revolved around what was significant at certain times in people's lives in Britain. Their media consumption patterns were largely based on tastes, aesthetics and affectivity shared with the majority of British youth. However, these choices of style-based youth culture were not free from structural factors such as gender, ethnic/cultural background and age. For example, some individuals who felt marginalized because of their Chinese identity in real life actively sought peer recognition through online gaming or consuming ethnic Chinese media.

Yeh (2014) showed that in the spaces of 'British Chinese/Oriental' club nights, British Chinese young adults contested the stereotype of model minority and redefined their leisure identities by drawing on British and global multi-cultures. In line with Yeh's findings, the preferences and consumption of mediated cultural products by school-aged British Chinese in this study were driven by transnational and hybrid youth and popular cultures, from Britain, East Asia, America and other parts of the world. While many participants were attracted to popular culture centred on 'youth', some of them related Chinese media products to the 'old', entailing unchanging traditions and stigmatized cultural values. On the other hand, they showed a strong preference for Chinese media products produced under the influence of Japanese or Korean popular culture. The consumption by these young people of ethnic media, including TV and the internet, may have served to strengthen their pre-existing diasporic consciousness and transnational connections to their ethnic origin. However, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that these young participants have actively created unique identifications as British Chinese through media use. Nevertheless, with reference to the findings in the previous chapter, the contested interpretations of media discourses by British Chinese young people demonstrate their awareness of cultural stereotypes and eagerness to forge distinct British Chinese identities through media representations. This negotiation of identities by resisting and reproducing stereotypes is further discussed in the space of schools in the next two chapters.

## **Chapter 8**

### **‘Model Minority’ in Mainstream Schools: Resistance and Reproduction of Stereotypes**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

As shown in Chapter 2, British Chinese pupils have maintained their position as the highest achieving ethnically defined group within the British education system over the past decade. This achievement has led to a simplistic public representation of British Chinese pupils as the ‘model minority’ in schools with good grades and impeccable behaviour. This chapter addresses part of the second research question by examining how different discourses have influenced the learning experiences and social interactions with peers of British Chinese young people in mainstream schools. The findings illustrate how individuals negotiate their behaviours to utilize, reproduce or resist cultural assumptions and stereotypes; and finally how their hybrid identities emerge under the combined forces of the various discourses. The first section investigates two prevalent discourses relating to the academic achievement of British Chinese young people. One is the discourse of ‘valuing education’ among British Chinese families and the other is the public portrayal of British Chinese as a high achieving ‘model minority’ in mainstream schools. This section reflects on the use of Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’ to understand the academic achievement and cultural identities of British Chinese. The second section examines the social activities and interactions of British Chinese pupils in mainstream schools. It discusses the influence of two discourses: the common expectation among British Chinese families of pupils to be ‘well-behaved’ (or dutiful and respectful), and the corresponding public perceptions of British Chinese pupils as an obedient and quiet ‘model minority’ in schools. The findings demonstrate the diverse responses of British Chinese pupils to these discourses, ranging from compliance and celebration to struggle and resistance, which leads the discussion beyond the homogenized perceptions of British Chinese young people as pupils in mainstream schools.

## **8.2 Academic achievement and cultural identities of British Chinese**

### **8.2.1 The discourse of ‘valuing education’: from habitus to the identity marker**

Frances and Archer (2006) identify a discourse of ‘valuing education’ constructed by Chinese in Britain as a collective habitus. It is believed to contribute to the high academic aspirations and achievement of British Chinese pupils and signifies a distinctive aspect of British Chinese identity. This study also found that a common appreciation of education is deeply embedded in the perceptions, assumptions and learning practices of British Chinese families. Across the entire interview sample, British Chinese pupils acknowledged ‘valuing education’ as one of the distinctive features of their ‘Chineseness’. For example,

B1: Chinese are clever people. I think that’s in the blood. I always get questions like, “Why are you Chinese so clever?” I’m like, “Not really, it’s just you are dumb!” (Laughs)

G3: I think that’s because of Chinese parenting, if you switch parents with your friend, then you will be the dumb one.

(Extracted from group discussion in GCSE class in School N)

The evident humour in the responses revealed the pupils’ awareness that their ‘cleverness’ or academic progress was linked to their ethnicity and cultural upbringing. The majority of British Chinese interviewees recognised that this aspect of ‘Chineseness’ offered necessary conditions for their academic excellence, such as valuing education, discipline and hard work. To them, outstanding academic achievement exists simply because their ‘parents made them work on it’ (Johanna, 14). All interviewees agreed that ‘education is important’ (B1-GW). Many also shared the assumption of their families that through education they could achieve upward social mobility, or for some maintain current social status. The purpose of having a good education, as B3-GN explained, is to find a good job and to be ‘rich and respectable’.

Archer and Francis (2006) suggest that the British Chinese habitus of ‘valuing education’ helps structure the decisions and behaviours of many British

Chinese parents regarding their children's education. The present study confirms other findings (Francis & Archer, 2005b) that British Chinese parents have high academic expectations of their children. The parents of almost all young British Chinese interviewees (26 out of 29) in this study expected them to achieve A grades in all GCSE subjects. Two of the several extreme cases were reported as follows:

My Mum actually said if I do not get A\* in maths, she's gonna kill me.

(G2-GW)

Chinese parents, if you get like ninety per cent, they will be like, oh you are so **stupid**, you **stupid** child.

(G1-GS)

Another feature within the discourse of 'valuing education' is that not all school subjects are valued equally. More than half of interviewees reported that their parents placed more emphasis and higher expectations on their performance in mathematics, science and English. These subjects were 'more important' (Simon, 14) because they were thought more likely to lead to a reliable career. The tendency was also reflected in the choices of university subjects made by British Chinese young people as shown in Section 10.4.2. This appreciation and emphasis placed on education did not only stem from traditional Chinese culture, but was also conditioned by the past migration experiences of migrant families and their class trajectories through education.

Believing in the importance of education, British Chinese parents utilize the different forms of capital available to them (economic, social and cultural) to help their children advance academically (Archer & Francis, 2006). Chinese parents in this study were keen to monitor and participate in their children's learning at school. Parents from a middle-class and professional background were dedicated to gathering information about the British education system and transferring their own skills and knowledge as resources to help their children. Yunke (girl, aged 14) gave one extreme example:

For my GCSE exams, my Mum, like, made me copy up the whole book, time and time again. For lessons, she went to my school and listened to all the Edexcel clips.<sup>33</sup>

Even parents who lacked English language ability and knowledge of the British education system willingly allocated a substantial amount of their income to pay for extra help for their children. Almost all of my interview participants reported that they were expected to study at weekends. They all had or used to have private tuition arranged outside school in addition to attending weekend Chinese complementary schools.

As noticed by Archer and Frances (2006), there is a discourse of social competition prevalent in British Chinese families. This discourse is interpreted as a form of social capital utilized by British Chinese parents to encourage their children's academic achievement by making comparisons within familial and community networks. In this study, the discourse of social competition was often delivered with an emphasis on children's shortcomings and faults, in contrast with the positive parenting and teaching practice currently advocated in Britain.

B2: When my friends or someone get more As or higher grades, they [B2's parents] were like **"Why can't you be like him?"**

B1, G1 & G3: YES!

B2: When I do better than my friends, they are like, "OK, fine, you can go". Chinese parents always think other people's children are better.

(Extracted from GCSE discussion group in School S)

Interviewer: Do your parents compare you with other children academically?



Kuan: No doubt, absolutely. Your grades, they all compare, say my son's done this; my daughter's done that.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Kuan: Like **a trophy**. My Mum keeps doing that, and gets my grade sheet behind my back.

(Kuan, boy, aged 17)

Children's academic achievement is no longer an individual outcome but rather a 'trophy' through which family honour is fulfilled. Children are objectified as the assets of their parents whose value was determined by the exam results they produced. Just as Zhou (2009) claims in the context of Asian American communities, B. Wong (2015) reports that British Chinese and Indian children's academic or career success is often turned into a matter of family pride, or gaining 'face' or respect within their local community. Apart from competing for family pride, many Chinese parents in this study believed that comparison with others could motivate their children's learning, while reminding them about their shortcomings could prevent them from '骄傲自满, complacency' (Ms Lin, head teacher of N and also a parent), which is often seen as leading to failure in promising pupils. Many parents I encountered in my fieldwork expressed worries that their children were too 'relaxed' (Ms Liang, parent interviewee) in mainstream English schools in comparison with their own schooling experiences and children's learning style in China. As Tingyi (girl, aged 13) described,

According to my Mum, in China, people have to get up [at] like four o'clock in the morning, go to morning class at five o'clock, their school day lasts for ages and they don't get many breaks. They come out from classes [at] around seven in the evening and then they have dinner, then they have another class. So it's horrible. I wouldn't want to study there.

Such exaggerated descriptions of Chinese schooling were used as a comparative reference to remind British Chinese children to keep working

hard. However, it also contributed to the formation and circulation of stereotypical perceptions of schooling in China among British Chinese young people. Another immediate solution these parents adopted to prevent their children's academic complacency was sending children to Chinese complementary schools. As the parent interviewee Ms Liang said,

他〔梁女士的儿子〕觉得他是班上最好的学生就骄傲了，但是来这里〔中文学校〕就是让他知道人外有人。

He [Ms. Liang's son] thinks that he is the best in the class and he can be very arrogant, but coming here [Chinese school] reminds him that there is always someone better.

Chinese parents were aware that British Chinese pupils were one of the best performing ethnic groups in British schools. As the parent interviewee Ms Fan commented,

这里中国人的小孩都跟人精似的。

Here [in Chinese school] Chinese people's children are all like prodigies.

In their minds, Chinese schools function as a harbour that attracts top-set pupils with similarly high academic aspirations. While waiting for their children's Chinese lessons, parents often got together to exchange information regarding choices of schools, private tuition, extracurricular activities, their children's performances, and parenting skills. The social connections and competitiveness established within the Chinese community became a form of social capital, almost exclusive to British Chinese families, deployed to motivate their children academically.

However, the emphasis on academic grades and social competition may lead to strains and potential problems in British Chinese children's psychological development and family relationships. In this study, children who are not

academically outstanding often experienced a fall in confidence when they failed to meet their parents' expectations. As David (18) said,

They [his parents] think too highly of me. If I do not do well, they will just scold me for being lazy. Then, one time, I just had enough and told them I'm just STUPID, OK, I'm STUPID.

While British Chinese parents' high expectations and involvement in education are celebrated as one of the driving forces for their children's outstanding academic achievement, David's outburst of self-devaluation showed the pressure and frustrations the British Chinese habitus may place on British Chinese pupils. Even academically strong children often felt their achievements were not fully recognised by their parents. As Yunke said with frustration, 'I'm never good enough for my mother... I tried to explain to her, but it only gets worse'. Top pupils like Ming and Yunke (girl, 14) were facing similar or even more pressure than their less able British Chinese peers. When Yunke constantly felt unrecognised by her mother, her parents' Chinese friends would tell their children to look up to her because she was 'good all the time'. She hated being compared to other children, even though she was always the better one. 'Those kinds of pressures drive me crazy,' she said, almost in tears. The discourse of valuing high achievers among British Chinese families also isolated those academically more able young people from their peers. Yunke believed that few people would like her because she made others feel bad. Ming also said his sister 'resent(ed)' him because he was always better than she was. Using social competition as social capital and motivation to learn has achieved positive results in the British Chinese community, but possible problems are often ignored by British Chinese parents and under-discussed by educational researchers.

The discourse of 'valuing education' was delivered through a series of practice including practices such as the out-spoken high expectations of academic scores, the various forms of investment in educations, the emphasis on social competition and the strict control over choices of learning, forming a distinct British Chinese 'habitus'. There are a few considerations when using the

concept of 'habitus' to understand the aspiration and dedications to education in British Chinese families. Firstly, this habitus of 'valuing education' cannot be essentialized as a static cultural trait exclusive to British Chinese families. This study found that the discourse itself was evolving and adapting, in various degrees, to discourses and practices within the field of education in Britain. Four interviewees who migrated to Britain at an early age noticed that their parents had become 'more liberal' (Ying, girl, 18) in relation to education after living in Britain for a few years. Three British-born interviewees reported that their parents would only ask them to 'do your [their] best' (G3-AW) or 'make your [their] own choice as long as you are happy' (Kuan, boy, 16). These expressions contrasted with the traditional Chinese parenting philosophy that emphasises filial piety and collective responsibility. However, these children soon pointed out that these slogans should not be taken at face value. As G3-AW pointed out, for her parents, 'the best you can do is the best you can get which is A, not B or C or D'. Similarly, for sixteen-year-old Kuan's mother, 'the least you can get to be happy is A'. Nevertheless, the contradictions between what was said and what was done displayed the interactions between different discourses, the fluid nature of habitus and the strategies individuals adopted by selecting and combining the different forces of discourses.

The second consideration is the need to recognise the complexity behind the collective habitus of British Chinese families because of the diversity of the Chinese population in Britain. Contrary to common descriptions of British Chinese parents fixating on academic achievement, all interviewees in this study, regardless of their socio-economic background, had been required by their parents to learn at least one musical instrument and to play at least one sport. However, the reasons and motivations behind this educational investment can be very different. To some British Chinese parents, participation in art, music and sports is a signifier of class. Educational investment in these areas became a form of symbolic capital in realizing the desired social status. Even the choices of a specific musical instrument and sport were carefully controlled because of the symbolic meanings of class they represent. As Zhengyi (boy, 15) said, 'As to learning an instrument, my parents sort of restricted down to violin or piano'. Violin and piano were the

two most popular instruments among British Chinese families. Children who chose other things would mostly be ‘corrected’ (Jake, 16). When Jake’s mother ‘pushed’ him to learn a musical instrument, he chose guitar because he thought it was ‘cool’, but was told he had made ‘a wrong choice’ because his parents thought ‘playing guitar would be someone down in the London underground trying to get some money’. He was made to give up learning guitar after a year and switch to piano, which his parents saw as more appropriate to their social status. Another example is Yunke, who admitted she had never enjoyed playing the violin. She kept playing it and taking grade exams just because it was ‘a good achievement’, in her mother’s opinion. As discussed in Section 10.4.2, many British Chinese children’s learning in art, music and sports was restricted to leisure time rather than being allowed to develop into a potential career choice.

On the other hand, three parents in this study, all highly educated professionals, identified more with the dominant educational discourses in Britain that emphasises developing learners’ interest through fun learning experiences. These parents invested in extra-curricular activities in order to provide their children with a ‘well-rounded education’, which is also a prevalent discourse among middle-class families in Britain. Ms Liang and her husband were both senior university researchers. As she explained,

小孩子吧，他可能有各种各样的天份。你不让他学的话，你不知道他有哪方面的天分。当时小的时候让他们去学很多东西呢，要给他们机会去看看他们在哪方面比较擅长。

Children, they may have all kinds of talent. If you do not let them learn, you would not know in which area they have talent. When they were small, I took them to learn many things. I need to give them plenty of opportunities to try different things and see what they are good at.

Ms Liang’s account of ‘discovering and nurturing talent’ may have represented the belief that there are alternative ways to success other than academic

achievement for British Chinese young people. Another parent interviewee, Mr Deng, a secondary school teacher, also said, 'I have always been a good student, but I don't think that is the only right way for my children'. These parents demonstrated their active reflection on and alteration of embedded assumptions about education, based on their own experiences.

These two examples of parents had reached a similar parental decision to support their children's extra-curricular education. However, parents like Jake's mother controlled what subjects to learn based on the calculated social, symbolic and economic values of the subject. Parents like Ms Liang tried to give their children chances to cultivate interest and decide what to learn. Therefore, while acknowledging the influence of the discourse of 'valuing education' in British Chinese families, it is too hasty to see this common attitude towards education as a fixed cultural trait, the reason for the academic excellence of British Chinese pupils, or an essentialized marker for British Chinese cultural identity.

### **8.2.2 High-achieving 'model minority': source of ethnic pride or exclusion?**

The discourse of 'valuing education' has also been projected to the wider British society and a perception of British Chinese pupils as the 'model minority' in school has been formed over the years. In studies conducted in Manchester in the 1990s, Woodrow and Sham (2001) found that British Chinese pupils remained largely conditioned by traditional Chinese behavioural rules such as 'respect for superiors' and 'filial piety' in regard to their education even though they were largely born and educated in England. However, this study argues that British Chinese pupils are far from living in a 'cocoon' created by introspective Chinese families as Sham and Woodrow (1998) suggest. They equally draw on British educational values, mainstream discourses and youth culture in their school lives and in the construction of their identities.

All British Chinese pupils in this study were aware of the 'model minority' stereotype that sees pupils of Chinese origin as hardworking, polite, obedient

and academically high achieving in mathematics and science. Their interpretations of this stereotype were multi-layered. When I first touched upon this subject, almost all pupils expressed a sense of pride in the image of 'model minority'. 'It is a stereotype, but it is a good stereotype; it brings good reputation', as Jake (16) said. However, as conversations progressed, some pupils expressed feelings of being pressured to live up to others' expectations of 'Chineseness'. For example, Ke felt she really needed to improve on her mathematics, because if not 'it's kind of **a let-down** to China'. Ke not only accepted the stereotype but also transformed it into a motivation to learn and as part of her duty as a Chinese person. To these pupils, being good at mathematics (or studying in general) became a necessary condition to claim 'Chineseness'. Nevertheless, some pupils like Namjyu often felt frustrated by this assumption:

But just because I am Chinese doesn't mean I am a super computer and smart, I am still a person...I just fit in those stereotypes and I don't as well. If I put up my hand and say the wrong answer, people would say, you are Chinese, you are **meant to be** smart, how can you get the wrong answer?

(Namjyu, boy, aged 15)

As their academic achievements were often assumed to derive from their 'Chineseness', British Chinese pupils were pressured to put more effort into studying in order to live up to the perception. Ironically, the extra effort they put into study was often underrated because they were 'meant to be' good because they were Chinese. When being good at study is essentialized as an innately Chinese ability, despite being a positive stereotype, it also marginalizes those who do not fit the stereotype.

I hate this whole thing of Chinese being good at maths... I'm not good at maths, as a Chinese **should be**... but I didn't choose to be Chinese.

(Emily, aged 15)

When pupils like Emily did not display the perceived Chinese quality imposed by public discourse, one way for them to resist the stereotype is to downplay or negate 'Chineseness' as part of their identity. These persistent cultural assumptions inevitably shape their perceptions of themselves, creating confusions and struggles in the construction of their self-identifications.

While most participants protested the stereotypical view of British Chinese pupils, they very often attributed the same stereotype to their peers in China. From their accounts, they established a hidden reference scale when discussing the discourse of 'model minority'. Referring to their peers in China on the one hand and their British schoolmates on the other, British Chinese pupils in this study often positioned the three groups on a scale. Pupils in China were the best at studying, the most hard working and the most obedient; British Chinese pupils were in the middle; and their British peers were in general quite relaxed or even lazy. For example, Yunke (girl, aged 14) studied at one of the best private schools in England, where pupils 'literally have no free time' and she faced fierce competition at school as well as pressure from her parents. In spite of this, she still hesitated to categorize herself as 'hardworking':

I may not say that I'm hardworking compared to the Chinese pupils that my Mum is comparing me to. But I thought if it's from an English person's point of view, I suppose they probably would say that we are **more hard working, more good and less rebellious** and stuff, **like quiet and shy and all good**, maybe that's the **qualities we have**.

It was very common for British Chinese pupils like Yunke to attribute qualities such as being 'hardworking', 'all good', 'shy' and 'obedient' to an inherent 'Chineseness', which complies with the stereotypical views of British Chinese pupils. Meanwhile, they associated Britishness with laziness and lack of motivation in educational settings, creating or conforming to another stereotype.



However, while most of my British Chinese interviewees identified themselves as top-performing pupils, they also refused to call themselves ‘model’ students. Some admitted that they had skipped lessons, missed homework and ‘messed around’ in classrooms. Those pupils who had schooling experiences in China noticed they had become ‘lazier in study’ (Ying, girl, 18) because they were ‘influenced by the people like the English’, who were ‘more relaxed about the standards of learning and education’ (Yunke). Their accounts reinforced the essentialized perceptions of both Chinese and British pupils in public discourse. They perceived themselves as being in between two worlds and possessing qualities of both parties. In their eyes, the good performances and behaviours of Chinese pupils were also too ‘uptight’ and ‘rigid’ (Lu, girl, 14), whereas the relaxed and rebellious ‘British’ pupils were cool and funny. As Lu said,

**We** are more relaxed... So if you kind of do bad in the test, oh it’s fine, you will do it next time. But **they** [Chinese parents and Chinese pupils] are just like “Oh my gosh, what happened?”

The clear distinction of ‘we’, the British-born and/or British-raised Chinese, and ‘they’, the Chinese-born and raised parents or pupils, indicated the degree to which these pupils tried to maintain distance from the stereotypes of Chinese pupils who care a great deal about exam results. However, at the same time, they positioned themselves by reproducing the stereotypes of pupils in China and Britain as comparative groups. This stereotypical reference scale was also used in terms of British Chinese parenting and styles of social interactions. For example, parents in China were seen as the strictest, British Chinese parents in the middle, and British parents the least strict; pupils in China were thought to be very shy and obedient, British Chinese pupils in the middle, and British pupils open and active. Presenting this stereotypical reference scale here does not imply agreement with these crude distinctions. This study is more interested in the ways in which British Chinese pupils position themselves and construct their cultural identities in the process of resisting and reproducing stereotypes.

Another reason for these young British Chinese to resist of the image of 'high achieving pupils' is the fear of being 'othered' as timid and 'geeky' (B2-GW) among their peers. The double-sided stereotype, such as clever/geeky, hardworking/quiet-passive, which is in part a source of ethnic pride, also forms barriers in their social relations with their peers (see more discussion in Section 8.3.4). Most British Chinese parents in this study, on the other hand, had never imagined that high-achieving pupils would become 'othered' and excluded by their peers in British schools. In their own schooling experiences in China, the top-performing and best-behaved pupils were always the most respected in class. As Min's mother kept telling her, 'If you do well in school, everything will be all right.' In British schools, however, the 'Chineseness' of British Chinese boys is discursively separated from 'laddishness' or 'normal masculinity'. The 'Chineseness' of British Chinese girls often means being submissive and lacking confidence. Neither gender role conforms to the 'ideal' type of pupils in Western educational discourses, namely assertive, challenging and creative learners (Archer & Francis, 2005b; Francis & Archer, 2005c). British Chinese parents' lack of understanding of British school culture and classroom dynamics also creates disjuncture and conflicts in parent-child relations concerning their schooling experiences.

### **8.3 Social integration of British Chinese pupils in mainstream schools**

As discussed in Chapter 2, previous studies such as those by Parker (1995), Song (1997a, 1997b) and Sham & Woodrow (1998) emphasise the influence of the catering trade on the schooling experiences of British Chinese pupils. It is argued that the need to help out with the family-run business restricted the leisure time of British Chinese children and hindered their social integration (Song, 1997a). A more recent study by Mau (2014) challenges the portrait of British Chinese pupils as reclusive. Mau reports that the majority of her interviewees had a diverse friendship group and participated in a variety of school activities. In line with Mau's study, the findings from this study suggest that all participants, regardless of socio-economic status, were more engaged in school activities and integrated with their peers than the previous generation. However, the findings from this study do not imply straightforward integration and disappearing social exclusion. On the contrary, the process of

integration was always actively negotiated by individuals under the influence of different social discourses and power dynamics in different contexts.

### **8.3.1 Participation in school activities**

All the young British Chinese interviewees in this study claimed that they were participating in or had once participated in school activities, such as orchestra, chess club, music club, the rugby team, and so on. Some of them were particularly active: for example, Yunke, Lu, Ming and a few others had after-school activities (choir, orchestra, swimming, chess, tennis, etc.) every weekday. The children who participated less in school activities came from various family backgrounds. The reasons for their lack of school activities were based on personal preferences rather than socio-economic background: some had activities arranged outside of the school, and some just preferred watching TV or playing online games at home.

Contrary to the findings of Sham and Woodrow (1998) that British Chinese parents required their children to go home directly after school, British Chinese parents in this study generally encouraged their children to participate in after-school activities. Even those parents who worked in a family catering business would prioritize school activities. Ms Fong and her husband used to run a small Chinese takeaway. No matter how busy and demanding the business was, she had never allowed her two daughters to work in her takeaway. Even when they were struggling to keep the takeaway running, she still made sure that both her daughters attended their piano lessons and school drama rehearsals. With nearly a hundred employees to run their restaurants, Ms Wong and her husband did not particularly need the help of their children in the business. Their children Josie (aged 15) and Jake (aged 16) were required to help in the restaurants for two to three hours during weekends and a few days during school holidays. The purpose was to help them gain work experience and knowledge of the family business. Priority was always given to their children's study or school activities. However, British Chinese parents' encouragement of participation in school activities was not without certain conditions. Extra-curricular were secondary to academic

results. During the exam season, almost half of British Chinese pupils reported reducing time in extra-curricular activities to prepare for exams.

### **8.3.2 Circle of friends: British, British Chinese and ‘Fresh Chinese’**

In Woodrow and Sham’s study (2001), British Chinese participants living in Manchester preferred their children to have Chinese friends rather than mixing with the majority of British pupils. But Mau’s (2014) recent study with British Chinese young people in London claims otherwise. This study, in line with Mau’s research, suggests that the friendship groups of British Chinese young people consist of a mix of ethnicities, with ethnic Chinese friends in the minority. One reason for this was the dispersed distribution of Chinese settlement as discussed in Chapter 2. With limited ethnic Chinese pupils at school, for some British Chinese pupils, having non-Chinese school friends was not entirely a personal decision. The majority of my young British Chinese participants attended ‘culturally mixed’ schools in and around London (Zhengyi, boy, aged 15). They reported that their friends were ‘of all sorts’ (Johanna, aged 14) and ‘from all over the world’ (Wendy, aged 15). Several interviewees mentioned that the majority of their ethnic Chinese friends were from Chinese complementary schools and family friends rather than from their mainstream schools.

Contrary to those British Chinese pupils in Woodrow and Sham’s study (2001) who always spent lunchtimes with Chinese friends, my interviewees reported an opposite pattern:

There is a quite interesting phenomenon in my school. You will find that all the Indian people are together, all the black people are together and all the white people are together, but all the Chinese people are either with the Indian people or the black people or the white people but not together.

(Gang, boy, aged 16)

In my school, they called us the Asian Group. But we are not really like the Indian or Pakistani people magnetized together. We are all mixed up really.

(Wendy, aged 15)

British Chinese young people often categorized their friends into three groups. The first group was British, including those who were born and/or raised in Britain of different ethnicities apart from ethnic Chinese. The second category was British Chinese, including British-born and/or raised ethnic Chinese. The third category was 'Chinese Chinese' (B2-AN) or 'fresh Chinese' (G2-AN), which referred to those who had recently migrated from China. The criteria of the categorization were based on the extent of shared experiences of growing up rather than nationalities and ethnicities. Almost all of the participants agreed that British Chinese were the easiest to get along with because 'they are Chinese and also they are more accustomed to British culture' (Gang, aged 16). Nevertheless, their attitudes towards British friends and 'Chinese Chinese' friends were polarized.

Some British Chinese pupils thought they could 'blend in' (Emily, aged 15) easily with their British friends by downplaying their Chineseness. 'I don't think they see me as Chinese', as Emily claimed. As shown above in Gang and Wendy's description, they could mix well with a diverse group of pupils because they have similar experiences of growing up in Britain. However, some of these well-integrated British Chinese young people expressed that they had had 'cultural clashes with the really fresh Chinese people' (G2-AN):

For the 'fresh Chinese friends', I had to make friends with them because they are all like socially awkwardly talk to me. If I see someone, there's always head down, don't really talk and you will have to talk to them. And if you talk to them, they will maybe just play on their computer games and be very quiet.

(B2-AN)

I don't think it is as comfortable to be with the Chinese Chinese, 'cause of our different views. We are **from different places**, even if we are both Chinese.

(Simon, aged 14)

You can easily tell the difference. They [the Chinese Chinese] tend to dress a lot younger than they are. They are 15, and they still wear Hello Kitty stuff, and tie their hair up with bands.

(Johanna, aged 14)

These British Chinese young people aptly identified their differences with the 'fresh Chinese' pupils in terms of social codes, attitudes and beliefs, and attributed these differences to the places from which they came and the cultures in which they were immersed. They distinguished their own British Chinese identities from the 'fresh' Chinese identities according to the way they talked, dressed, and viewed the world. To apply Bourdieu's term, they identified the differences between cultural identities based on the habitus these two groups of young people had developed from their past life experiences. But these unconscious dispositions would alternate with the accumulation of current experiences in a new field. As people who were once 'fresh Chinese' stayed longer in Britain, they also found it increasingly difficult to make friends with 'fresh Chinese'. Ying (girl, aged 18) came to the UK when she was nine. Although fluent in both Mandarin and English, she found the shared interests between her and her 'fresh Chinese' friends were becoming more limited. She said, 我觉得他们像活在 21 世纪, 我自己像活在 17 世纪。(I think they are living in the 21st century, and I am living in the 17th century).' Because she was not up to date with Chinese popular culture, she could not share in conversations with newly migrated Chinese friends.

In some extreme cases, British Chinese pupils like Lu (girl, aged 13), even tended to avoid making friends with the newly arrived Chinese pupils. Lu did not know any English when she came to the UK at the age of four. Although she caught up very quickly and got into one of the best private girls' schools in the UK, she still remembered the social difficulties she encountered in the first

few years after migration. 'Having an accent, that's not good, they'll rip the shit out of you', said Lu. Given her own difficult experiences at school, when I asked her whether she would help the 'fresh Chinese' at her school, she shook her head,

Well, I wouldn't get involved. Because the people who will rip the shit out of you are those top dogs in school. I don't want to get between them. I can't help them because they need to learn how to get over it and deal with it.

Lu's account showed the social and learning difficulties and everyday racism that newly migrated Chinese young people might encounter at school. The attitude that one should 'get over' and 'deal with' bullying and racism reflected that Chinese pupils often adopted a strategy of acceptance and disregard when facing racism. This attitude of 'brushing off' racism has been reported as the most common strategy used by British Chinese pupils (Archer & Francis, 2005a; Mau, 2013). The fact that British Chinese pupils distanced themselves from the 'fresh Chinese' and negated the qualities that signified 'fresh Chinese' disclosed their fears of being seen as 'different' or 'other' by their majority peer group. They achieved their self-identification by accentuating their similarity to majority British pupils and their differences from 'fresh Chinese' pupils. At the same time, a number of 'fresh Chinese' also expressed their reluctance to make friends with British-born Chinese. In Min's (girl, aged 15) mind, **'they'** [British born Chinese] are different from **us**; it is hard to feel intimate with them, sometimes even more difficult than with the white and black people'. The discrepancy of individual discourses between the British-born and raised and the 'fresh Chinese' demonstrates that having a similar ethno-cultural origin did not necessarily draw these young people together or guarantee a shared identification. Their lived experiences in the past and immediate environment in Britain may have played a more important part in shaping their decisions on who they were and how they should behave.

Still, six British Chinese interviewees felt more comfortable making friends with 'Chinese Chinese' people because they 'are all Chinese', and they 'have

more things in common to talk about' (B3-AW), such as sharing the 'same taste for food' (Julia, aged 17), family values and parental expectations. Their feelings of intimacy towards 'fresh Chinese' were mainly because of the similar cultural values and familial traditions. Interestingly, the racism that made some British Chinese pupils disassociate themselves from their Chinese peers on the other hand drew other British Chinese pupils closer to 'fresh Chinese' pupils. As B1-GW described, 'if you say that there are two strangers, probably I will go to the Chinese, because at least I know they would not bully me or tease me because I'm Chinese'. This group of pupils established their identifications based on the presumption of shared ethnicity, cultural background and family upbringing. Their differentiation or exclusion from the majority British pupils was reinforced by the external perceptions, anti-immigration sentiments and racism in their social environment.

Chapter 7 details how online social activities (via SNSs and online games) form an important part of young people's activities with friends. Apart from these virtual interactions, the activities that British Chinese young people carried out with their friends in school mainly included doing homework, chatting and sports. Outside of school, they and their school friends would go shopping, have meals, watch films, go bowling, play pool, or go to daytime parties and sleepovers. Several British Chinese young people reported doing different activities with their British friends, British Chinese friends and 'fresh Chinese' friends. With British friends, they normally stayed in school chatting or would 'go around someone's house, sit and maybe watch a movie, it's really casual with stuff' (Julia, aged 17). They tended to go out with their British Chinese and 'Chinese Chinese' friends, having meals in Chinatown, going shopping, singing Karaoke, playing sports, and speaking Chinese together. The popular conversation topics in both groups concerned music, TV programmes, sports and celebrity gossip. Some only shared their interest in Korean dramas and Japanese animation with their British Chinese or 'fresh Chinese' friends.

British Chinese girls in this study reported that they would discuss their feelings about the opposite sex with their most intimate friends, regardless of



their ethnicities. British Chinese boys in this study tended to avoid 'boys' talk' (David, aged 18) as a whole or limited such talk to times with their British Chinese friends. Three interviewees also mentioned that they avoided talking about sex-related topics with their 'fresh Chinese' friends because '他们没那么开放 they are not that liberal' (Ying, girl, aged 18). With British and British Chinese friends, they can talk about sex 'just as normal' (Namyu, boy, aged 15). Contrary to the stereotype of British Chinese pupils being shy, I encountered several British Chinese young people, especially girls, who were particularly active in talking about sex and made sexual jokes in Chinese schools. As Namyu explained, it was because 'it is a hush-hush topic at home and they just want to get it out before they go back to their house'. All British Chinese interviewees in this study reported that they would not discuss relationships or sex-related topics with their parents.

On the other hand, British Chinese boys and girls are often seen as existing outside of 'normal' gender identities owing to their image as 'good pupils' (Archer & Francis, 2005b). Teachers saw British Chinese boys with comparatively little masculinity. British Chinese girls are often positioned as oppressed, diligent, silent, and desexualized (Francis & Archer, 2005a). In both the home and school settings, British Chinese young people were encouraged not to appear 'attractive', and as shown in the next section, many parents held a conservative view about girls wearing make-up. However, the issues of sex and relationships, which are important aspects of the lives of young people, are often under-explored among British Chinese young people. The restraints on love relationships imposed by their families and by stereotypes further limit their choices of life partners and hinder their integration into mainstream society (see Chapter 10). Future research is needed to explore the theme of love and sexuality among British Chinese young people.

### **8.3.3 Parents' interference in children's social lives**

Sham and Woodrow (1998) reported that British Chinese parents in their study tended to prevent their children from mixing with white British youths, provoking the isolation of many British Chinese children. This study found that

parental interference was not so much about their child's choice of friends but more about limiting their time spent with friends, and ways of interacting. One of the most important reasons for this restriction was that British Chinese parents tended to put study above any of their children's other activities. To them, 'anything that is not study is a waste of time' (Gabby, aged 15). This is also characterised by Yunke (girl, aged 14) as follows:

If my friends want to come to my house, I always have to ask my Mum. They [Yunke's friends] will be, like, "Wait, how come about 80% you just don't have any time?" I would say, "Well, because I've got to study".

This kind of parental restriction stems from a fixation on academic achievement as discussed in Section 8.2.1. Friendship provides one major form of support for those British Chinese children facing pressure from exams and overwhelming parental expectations. Under huge pressure from study and parental expectations, British Chinese children like Yunke especially needed 'mental support' from friends. Yunke had problems handling the stress of exams and often could not sleep before exams. She rarely confided in her parents, only expressing her emotions to her closest friends who would not judge her if she did really badly in an exam, 'just like the opposite of my parents'.

As well limited time for peer social interactions, sleepovers and going out late at night were also reported as 'not allowed' by the majority of British Chinese pupils (25 out of 29). As Namyu (boy, aged 15) described,

Most of my mates, they go out like eleven o'clock. But my Mum always doesn't like me going out. She will say you can go out but you should be home by like six in winter.

A number of British Chinese pupils complained that their parents would call them 'every two hours' (B2-AN) when they were out with friends, which embarrassed them greatly. Some of them deliberately ignored the check-up

calls or deceived their parents about their plans to go out. Although these British Chinese children complained about the controlling parenting, they also showed understanding and acceptance of parental interference.

In a way, it's not their fault. They normally don't go out, so they just don't understand even if I tell them what we do.

(Namyu, boy, aged 15)

As discussed in Section 6.2.3, many first-generation Chinese immigrants have limited social lives in terms of time and social circles. Their lack of understanding of and participation in mainstream social activities also affects the social lives of their British-raised children. This disjuncture also aggregates in relation to youth culture that often represents rebellious and oppositional attitudes to authorities. Some British Chinese parents were particularly sensitive to their children's appearances and actions that could reflect 'trouble'. Jing's parents frowned upon him using street slang and wearing hoodies as they thought it made him 'look like a gangster or drug addict on the street.' Amy's parents also forbade her from wearing make-up because they believed '只有坏女孩子才画得像鬼一样地去学校. Only bad girls wear heavy and scary makeup to school'. When all her girlfriends talked about make-up and fashion, she often felt left out. As various scholars note (Buckingham, 2008; Hodgkinson & Deicke, 2007; Maria & Soep, 2005), young people negotiate their identities via different forms of youth culture, expressing themselves through fashion, music and language. Different forms of self-expressions as rebellious young people were largely suppressed in British Chinese families, because they were in contradiction with the prevalent parental expectations of children being 'well-behaved'.

#### **8.3.4 Well-behaved 'model minority': 'Quiet, sweet looking and innocent'?**

As discussed by Archer and Francis (2005b), the majority of British Chinese pupils position themselves as hardworking and well-behaved 'good pupils', upon which they build their educational self-esteem. British Chinese pupils in this study provided mixed interpretations of the stereotype of a 'well-behaved,

quiet and obedient' model minority. Many agreed that they could identify these common qualities in themselves and their British Chinese friends. Similar to the 'high-achieving' stereotype, the majority of British Chinese interviewees in this study took pride in this 'well-behaved' stereotype and wanted to maintain the Chinese reputation for being good pupils. They attributed these generalized British Chinese qualities to their Chinese family upbringing. A few (thirteen) interviewees reported that they were told by their parents to respect the authority of parents and teachers, to 'never speak back' (Namyu, boy, aged 15) and to 'keep quiet when you were not asked' (Yunke, girl, aged 14). Like the habitus of 'valuing education', the discourse of 'well-behaved' becomes for many British Chinese young people 'one of those things that sit in their mind' that they would 'automatically follow' (Namyu).

However, attitudes of British Chinese interviewees towards other pupils' misbehaviour at school varied. Five expressed their disapproval of pupils who messed around in class. 'I am not like them, in ten years' time, they won't be getting anywhere' said Zhengyi (boy, 15). The majority of interviewees claimed they would take a neutral position and 'stay[ed] quiet' as long as they were not involved. However, a few started to reflect on this discourse of 'good behaviour' in comparison with their peers, who do not always obey authority:

Sometimes I feel like they are lacking respect, other times I respect them for being able to express their feelings and opinions, challenge the parents and teachers. Even though I thought the teacher wasn't doing well, I wouldn't challenge them, but then that won't change anything.

(B3-GE)

In addition to quietly questioning the 'well-behaved' stereotype, some of these British Chinese pupils would directly challenge the image of the 'model minority' in various ways. For example, although many girls admitted that they were normally quiet in lessons when teachers were present, when they were with their friends they were very loud, turning into the 'most non-Asian Asians' (Lu, girl, aged 13). Lu often deliberately acted in the opposite way to the 'well-

behaved 'stereotype in order to avoid being seen by her classmates as 'an annoying teachers' pet'. The prevalent discourses of 'valuing education' and being 'well-behaved' left traces in their lives, just as the stereotypes did indeed reflect some truths about them, but they did not dictate or represent the full picture of their identities. They could respect and obey authority at school, stay indoors to play computer games and do extra revision, but they could also 'go out with friends, have a laugh and enjoy life' (Namyu, boy, aged 15). I will now present two examples to show how British Chinese young people innovatively utilized different forms of discourses and actively negotiated their cultural identities as ethnic Chinese, as pupils and as teenagers.

Joseph (aged 18) ticked all the boxes of being a model student: the best student academically in his year, the mathematics and chess champion and his year group's leading music scholar. However, at the age of fifteen, he often felt his peers saw him as 'a loner and a weirdo' because of his achievement and reputation for good behaviour. Therefore, when Chris, one of his classmates, asked him for help in mathematics, he thought it would be a good chance to make friends, although 'Chris was very annoying and unpopular'. They agreed that Joseph would travel to Chris's house to teach him mathematics every Saturday, and in return, Chris would pay Joseph £10 an hour for his help. Joseph helped Chris for four weeks, but there was no payment. What upset Joseph most was that Chris had told everyone at school that he tricked Joe into helping him for free. Joseph was quite upset; 'I don't care about the money, but I don't like to be seen as a fool'. Joseph did not want to report Chris to his teachers because he was concerned he would 'look even worse'. He decided to teach Chris a lesson 'like a man'— to beat Chris up. He had his reputation as the model student to maintain, though, so he could not risk being caught by his teachers. He carefully chose the time and location for his revenge, waiting until the last day of the spring term, when he caught Chris on his way home and 'punched Chris hard in the belly'. There was no school the next day so Chris could not report this incident to his teachers, and 'even if he did, no teacher will believe him', Joseph said with a satisfied smile. However, gossip about Joe's revenge spread quickly. Ironically, Joe's good reputation isolated him from other pupils, but his

misbehaviour helped him earn the 'real respect' of the other boys and helped him to make friends.

Min (girl, 15) was the only ethnic Chinese in her class in a single-sex state school. According to Min, most pupils thought the coolest thing to happen at school was a fight between girls. She often kept quiet and tried not to get into trouble. Recently one of the girls, Nicola started making fun of Min's appearance, calling her 'small eyes and short legs,' taking away her books and spreading rumours about Min behind her back. Min told her parents about her trouble at school. Unable to communicate with her teacher in English, her parents only suggested that she should ignore Nicola and stay out of trouble. Min took her parents' advice but her avoidance of Nicola only encouraged the harassment. One day in her ICT lesson, Nicola deliberately unplugged Min's laptop and took her charger. Min was very upset and confronted Nicola. Nicola started to throw things at Min. Driven by anger, Min got into a messy fight with Nicola. Soon they were separated by the teacher. Within one day the whole school knew that the 'shy Chinese girl had beaten up Nicola'. When Min's parents were informed about this incident, they still blamed Min for using violence and making trouble. Nevertheless, after that day, Nicola stopped harassing Min. Min had never suspected that her quietness and good manners, as instructed by her parents, were seen as weak and that it would be her violent response that deterred the bullies. 'I can take jokes about my eyes', she said excitedly, 'I just hate, they think Chinese people can't get it done because they are innocent, sweet looking, have good grades all that stuff.'

Joseph's and Min's stories demonstrate how culture, ethnicity and gender work as intertwined forces to shape British Chinese young people's perceptions of themselves, thereby influencing their behaviours at home, at school or among their peers. It was insufficient for model pupil Joseph to impress teachers and parents with his high grades and self-discipline: he also needed to express certain 'laddish' behaviours as a manifestation of his masculinity. However, he performed the laddish role through calculations and careful planning in order to preserve his reputation as a 'good pupil' and at the

same time win respect and popularity among his peers. Min's case showed that the stereotype of British Chinese girls as submissive and quiet is more likely to make them an easy target for racism and bullying in school. The parental expectations of 'good behaviour', 'model pupil' image and the 'stay out of trouble' attitude only hide potential problems and lead to suffering in silence. Joseph's and Min's stories also show that British Chinese young people are not completely passive recipients of powerful social discourses and stereotypes. These young people were prepared to take actions that went against their familial and social expectations if these actions could change their disadvantaged position in their peer group. Meanwhile, Min's story demonstrates that the need to display 'toughness' is not exclusive to boys. This 'toughness' signifies being able to confidently and firmly fight racism, but ironically it also means being able to put up with 'soft' racial jokes and handle harassment without involving teachers and parents. These examples show British Chinese young pupils to be active agents, not passive recipients of discourse and structure. They acted in their own interests depending on the power relations in specific situation, selecting and utilizing discourses, reinforcing or deconstructing stereotypes in order to (re)construct their identities in mainstream schools.

#### **8.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has addressed part of the second research question by examining the schooling experiences of British Chinese young people. Following the theoretical framework established in Chapter 3, it has examined the cultural identities of British Chinese young people in a regime of discourses. It has focused on investigating how the meanings, or the 'difference', of being a British Chinese pupil, are articulated, interpreted and reconstructed within various discourses, and then finally 'interpellated' into cultural identities. The prominent discourses of 'valuing education' and being 'well-behaved' among British Chinese families derive partly from Confucius cultural traditions and were later promoted by the families as a strategy for realizing upward social mobility in Britain. These discourses have been internalized and become 'habitus', structuring the perceptions and practices of many British Chinese parents and children. These subjective generative

schemes have been so durable and stable that they have reproduced certain cultural values across generations in the Chinese diaspora. The practice based upon these cultural dispositions subsequently led to a portrait of British Chinese pupils as a 'model minority' in British public discourse. The perceptions and representations of British Chinese from outside the diaspora in turn influences the opinions, actions and self-identifications of British Chinese young pupils. Through critically analysing the accounts of British Chinese young people and their parents, this chapter explored how British Chinese young people accept, but at the same time negotiate, resist but at the same time reproduce these discourses in mainstream schools.

This chapter has detailed the practices informed by the discourses of 'valuing education' and being 'well-behaved' in British Chinese families. Discussions of the learning experiences and social life of British Chinese young people in mainstream schools emphasised that both the habitus and the cultural identities it represented were constantly transformed in relation to dominant values and discourses within the field; they were (re)constructed by reflective individual agents according to the power regime of the specific context. When these two concepts were understood in fixed terms, however, even if they lead to positive 'ethnic success', this may place psychological pressure on and exclusion among British Chinese pupils, further restricting their personal development and self-identifications.

Many children viewed the 'positive' stereotypes of British Chinese pupils as a high-achieving and well-behaved 'model minority' in terms of ethnic pride, while others expressed their struggle to live up to expectations. Meanwhile, the other stereotypes, portraying British Chinese pupils as 'geeky, submissive and timid', became tools for 'othering' in mainstream schools. British Chinese pupils resisted and retaliated against these stereotypes by internalizing the discourses of racism in their accounts and reproducing new stereotypes. For example, in discussions devoted to their experiences of schooling, they flexibly positioned themselves by establishing the stereotypical reference scale of 'British', 'British Chinese' and 'fresh Chinese'. On the scale, they might position themselves as being both here and there, or neither here nor



there. These actions reflected their struggle with fixed and exclusive cultural claims. It also showed the evident need to deconstruct essentialized stereotypes and cultural assumptions. The findings disclose that we need to understand the construction of cultural identities as a process of moving towards interculturality. They are constructed and negotiated through interaction with others and with the various discourses in the field. These young people can obtain multiple identifications simultaneously, but they can also actively empower or limit these identifications according to their position and power relations within a specific context at a certain time.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Language, Culture and Identity: British Chinese Young People in Chinese Complementary Schools**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

Research reviewed in Chapter 2 discussed the influence of Chinese language acquisition and the social function of Chinese complementary schools in the construction of British Chinese young people's cultural identities. This chapter addresses part of the second research question by investigating the learning experiences and process of identity (re)construction of British Chinese young people in Chinese complementary schools. It begins by presenting recent changes and challenges experienced by London Chinese schools based on my fieldwork and experiences as both researcher and teacher. The discussion then specifically focuses on the use of Chinese cultural activities for learning Chinese language and cultural knowledge, investigating British Chinese pupils' opinions of these cultural activities in relation to their Chinese learning experiences and cultural identities. The findings also provide pedagogical applications for teaching Chinese as a community/heritage language (CHL) in Chinese complementary schools. Finally, this chapter examines the social functions of Chinese schools for British Chinese pupils and parents and reveals the tensions and divisions between sub-groups in Chinese schools.

#### **9.2 Pedagogical challenges in Chinese complementary schools**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the burgeoning interest in China as an emerging economic and political power and as a potential business partner has resulted in the rapid growth in Mandarin teaching in both the British Chinese community and wider British society. While the majority of pupils in Chinese complementary schools are still 'second-generation' British Chinese children, there is an increasing diversity in the ethnic, migratory and linguistic backgrounds of pupils. For example, all four Chinese school head teachers in this study noticed that in the last few years, their schools have attracted more pupils from other ethnicities such as White British, African and Indian, among others. They also confirmed that Cantonese-speaking pupils tend to switch to Mandarin classes in their senior years after acquiring some knowledge of their

mother tongue. 'Almost everyone wants to learn Mandarin in the end', head teacher Mr Li. in School E explained, 'because it will be an advantage for their future career.'

This study was based in the GCSE and A-level classes in the Chinese schools. Although it was common to group pupils according to ability rather than age, there were differences in both age and linguistic ability in GCSE and A-level classes. This was because advanced younger learners chose to sit the exams early, whereas less advanced older learners would skip two to three grades in order to take their GCSE/A-level exam in time. The number of pupils in Chinese schools often decreased significantly from junior years to senior years. In school N, for example, there were 60 pupils in Year 1 (accepting pupils at age 7) and Year 2 (accepting pupils at age 8) but only 7 pupils in Year 7 (accepting pupils aged 13). But as the perceived instrumental value of Chinese language increased in public discourses, an increasing number of pupils from various backgrounds joined the GCSE/A-level classes in order to gain credentials in Chinese language.

Most Chinese schools made adjustments to their curriculum to cater for the demands of diverse pupils. All four Chinese schools I visited employed two syllabi for their GCSE/A-level pupils. Originally, the schools taught from a series of twelve books called 中文 [Chinese] (Jia, 2007), published in China. This series was designed for the children of overseas Chinese. Each lesson consists of a short story, an essay or a classic poem, new vocabulary and grammar to learn, and some further reading materials. The two student exercise books focus mainly on consolidating literacy skills such as memorization of characters, grammatical drills and reading comprehension. Chinese cultural knowledge, values and customs are instilled through the texts as information to be learnt. However, there are limited learner-centred communicative cultural activities. In order to prepare for GCSE/A-level Chinese, the schools adopted teaching materials published in the UK such as *Edexcel GCSE Chinese* (Yan et al., 2009), *Edexcel Chinese for AS* (X. Li et al., 2008) and *Edexcel Chinese for A2* (Burch et al., 2009). These textbooks and materials are designed for pupils learning Chinese as a second/foreign

language and often used in mainstream English schools. To develop intercultural awareness, understanding and competence have been identified as key learning outcomes for language learners.

These schools faced problems and challenges with the changing pupil population and lack of appropriate pedagogical support and assessment. For example, the 2012 GCSE Mandarin class (twenty pupils aged from 11 to 15) in School N where I worked as a teacher were a heterogeneous group ranging from fluent native speakers to non-Chinese speakers with a different language background, learning objectives and ways of learning. The majority of pupils were born or raised in the UK with at least one Chinese-speaking parent (N=12). These pupils had acquired a basis of Chinese language and culture through interaction with their parents at home. They were already fluent bilingual speakers of Chinese and English before they joined the GCSE class. Their learning objective was to improve their grammar, accuracy and academic competence to the level of native Chinese speakers. Most of them found the national GCSE Chinese syllabi and assessments, which are designed for learning Chinese as a foreign language, too easy and preferred the syllabi of community language schools. One variation in this group is pupils whose mother tongue is Cantonese (N=3). These pupils often found it difficult to achieve the same standard in Mandarin as in their family language, Cantonese. But they still chose to take the exam in Mandarin. As Namyu (boy, aged 15) explained, 'My Cantonese is no problem, there is no need to prove it, but for Mandarin, I need a qualification'.

The second category of pupils were those who born or raised in the UK with neither parent as a Chinese speaker (N=3); this included ethnic Chinese children adopted by white British families. Without Chinese language exposure at home, these pupils learned Chinese as a foreign language. They often struggled to understand the lesson when the dominant teaching language was Chinese. After four years of study at Chinese school, all three of them still struggled to understand basic daily conversations in Chinese, and often found it very difficult to follow the school syllabi for mother-tongue

Chinese speakers. Very few of these pupils went on to complete A-level Chinese.

The final category of pupils consisted of native Chinese speakers who had recently migrated from China (N=5). These pupils attended Chinese school in the hope of maintaining their Chinese. However, their Chinese literacy and oral language skills well surpassed both the GCSE Chinese syllabus and the school syllabus for CHL learners. However, they could not complete the GCSE Chinese examination paper because of the requirement to answer exam questions in English. Hence, they attended Chinese school in order to learn how to take Chinese examinations in English rather than to improve their Chinese. In a seemingly contradictory sense it may be said that they attended Chinese schools to improve their English. As the demand from this group of pupils increased, School N opened an after-school English class in 2013.

This study does not intend to assign pupils to an arbitrary categorization purely based on family backgrounds or ignore the power of individual learning motivations and abilities, but it is important to recognise the influence of migratory experiences and families on their Chinese language learning. After all, as summarized by the head teacher Ms. Lin in School N,

每个星期在中文学校也就两三个小时，老师能做的也只有那么多。学生的学习成绩很大程度上取决与家庭的语言环境和父母的帮助。

With only two to three hours per week at Chinese school, there is only so much a teacher can do. The performance of students to a large extent depends on the family language environment and parental support.

In addition, the categorization summarized above is not only based on my observations, but also reflects the pupils' awareness and actions in establishing the boundaries of each group (see Section 9.4).

As a teacher in that class, I gave out instructions in both Chinese and English, followed two syllabi, and set different assessments for different groups of pupils in one classroom, yet it remained a challenge to cater for their diverse needs. What complicated the problem further was the disconnection between the syllabi used in Chinese schools and appropriate assessments for learning Chinese as a CHL. Although most Chinese schools follow a syllabus designed for CHL learners in junior years, they all adopted national syllabi for GCSE and A-level classes for pupils aged 13 and above. Ironically, their learning outcome is often judged by the results they achieved in GCSE and A-level Chinese rather than the CHL syllabus-based exams, because the GCSE and A-level are the most recognisable certificates for measuring Chinese learners' language proficiency in Britain. This disjunction between teaching and assessment not only poses great challenges for teachers who have to accommodate two different syllabi, but also creates confusion and frustration for pupils.

### **9.3 Learning Chinese culture in Chinese complementary Schools**

In spite of extensive discussions of the relationship between Chinese language learning and cultural identity by several authors (Francis et al., 2009, 2014; Mau, 2013), discussion of how British Chinese young people learn Chinese culture in these schools and its role in the (re)construction of cultural identities is largely absent. This section specifically investigates how British Chinese young people respond to different kinds of Chinese cultural activities employed in Chinese complementary schools; and how they identify themselves in relation to their learning experiences. Pedagogically, the findings provide some directions for how best to use cultural activities to enhance learning Chinese language and culture in these schools.

#### **9.3.1 Cultural activities in Chinese complementary schools**

This section introduces and categorizes the current cultural activities employed in London Chinese complementary schools.

##### ***National cultural activities in Chinese complementary schools***

At a national level, cultural activities are often initiated by national Chinese complementary schools' organisations such as the UK Association for the

Promotion of Chinese Education (UKAPCE) and the UK Federation of Chinese Schools (UKFCS) and implemented by their member schools. UKAPCE and UKFCS were founded around the same time in the mid-1990s by Chinese immigrants and sharing the same goal of promoting Chinese language and culture. But they are independent associations run by different teams. Over the years, UKAPCE has established close associations with China. Many of their activities are organised and sponsored by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of China and other cultural departments of Chinese regional government. UKFCS, on the other hand, has greater collaboration with UK mainstream primary/secondary schools and education departments in universities with regard to writing and publishing its own Chinese textbooks and providing teacher-training courses.

According to the activity table on the UKAPCE website,<sup>34</sup> they organised up to twelve national cultural activities for pupils in their member Chinese schools in 2014-2015. These included a cultural knowledge contest, a Mandarin recitation contest, a calligraphy contest, a writing contest, a Chinese idioms contest, Chinese New Year performances, and several ‘寻根 (roots-seeking)’ holiday camps in China. In the same year, UKFCS organised a New Year card competition, a story writing competition, a calligraphy competition, and New Year performances. Among these activities, the most prevalent category is literacy and oral activities with a cultural emphasis, such as writing and recitation competitions on topics related to China; and Chinese idiom contests, among others. The second most popular category features activities that promote the learning of Culture with a ‘big C’ which, as suggested by Seelye (1993), refers to culture as a heritage product such as literature, art, calligraphy, or folk dance. This category includes activities such as calligraphy contests, cultural knowledge contests testing knowledge of Chinese literature/art/history, traditional Chinese dancing and singing, Kung Fu, and drama performances for Chinese New Year. The third category includes activities designed to help students learn about culture with a ‘little c’, which means culture as a community practice that provides the knowledge of ‘what we do, when, and where’ (Seelye, 1993). These include cultural exchange sessions in holiday camps to China and cultural knowledge contests. The

winners of the cultural knowledge contests are invited to travel to China and join an international competition with overseas Chinese children from all over the world.

Many Chinese schools have registered with both associations in order to enhance their network, gain training opportunities, and obtain other forms of support. They all willingly prepare and participate in these national activities. But the execution of the preparation is down to individual teachers. During my fieldwork I heard many teachers express mixed feelings about these national cultural activities. On the one hand, these activities enriched the teaching and learning experiences, allowing pupils and teachers alike to connect with other CHL Chinese learners and teachers nationally and even internationally. On the other hand, some activities organised by these two associations were very similar and the schedules often clashed. Moreover, the majority of the cultural activities organised by these associations took the form of competitions and contests among Chinese schools, which put pressure and extra workload on the already tight teaching schedule for both member schools and individual teachers.

### ***Cultural activities in classrooms***

There is little curricular support for the design and integration of cultural activities in classroom teaching in these Chinese schools. As discussed above, the Chinese school syllabus contains very limited learner-centred communicative cultural activities. The Edexcel GCSE Chinese textbook, on the other hand, provides plenty of cultural activities that encourage pupils to consider and discuss cultural differences in relation to their own lived experiences in the UK. However, the level of the GCSE syllabus does not meet the needs of the majority of pupils in Chinese school. Since the Chinese school textbooks fail to provide appropriate resources for developing cultural activities, there are often no guidelines to control the frequency and quality of cultural activities carried out in lessons. Based on my participant observations in four schools, there are generally three categories of cultural activities carried out in classroom teaching.



The first category is literacy or oral practice with an emphasis on Chinese culture, such as writing essays about Spring Festivals or retelling Chinese folklore. The second category is activities for learning Culture with a 'big C', with lessons on poems, classical literature and artefacts. In this category, arts, cooking, craft and creating dramas adapted from classic literature are very popular among pupils. The third category is activities for learning culture with a 'small c', such as introducing knowledge about origins and customs of traditional festivals. Many teachers would normally present a series of 'to do' lists for festivals, such as food, rituals and code for dressing. Some teachers also use photographs and online videos to demonstrate the target cultural knowledge.

Organising cultural activities can provide solutions for the challenges in CHL classrooms mentioned in Section 9.3 by effectively engaging pupils with different levels of language. However, teachers in Chinese complementary schools generally dedicated limited time to cultural activities in lessons. The main focus of teaching was still on basic communication, literacy and translation. The majority of cultural activities in CHL classrooms focused either on the practice of language skills or specific cultural symbolic artefacts and rules. Some of these activities tended to essentialize Chinese culture as a distant, static and fixed entity because they did not fully represent the fast changing social and cultural environment of China. More importantly, most failed to connect with CHL learners living in the UK.

### **9.3.2 Learners' attitudes toward cultural activities in Chinese schools**

In both the individual and group interviews, pupils in the Chinese schools were firstly asked how often they participate in the national level and school level cultural activities respectively. Then, they were asked to nominate their most and least favourite activities and provide reasons for their choices. The answers varied and reflected teachers' specific choices of cultural activities in the classroom, but some general patterns in their various attitudes were identified.

### ***Cultural activities are fun***

In general, the positive feedback about cultural activities reported by pupils included: broadening cultural knowledge; putting learnt language into practice; developing a deeper understanding of Chinese language and culture; and enhancing confidence in communication with native Chinese speakers. However, the execution of these activities affected their attitudes. Learner-orientated communicative activities were favoured far more than teacher-centred lecturing. Their preferred cultural activities were those that provided them with a sense of participation and brought them closer to each other, such as dramas, Kung Fu, singing or dancing for school and inter-school performances:

I'm having great fun in the drama with my friends... I am very proud that we've won [the performances] this year.

(Zhengyi, boy, aged 15)

I don't like my role in the drama, but I still asked my Mum to help me read the whole story.

(Johanna, aged 14)

You remember more in a performance than when you read it, reading it from a book... It is a good way to teach the younger children about our culture in an interesting way.

(Kuan, boy, aged 17)

In order to win a prize in the inter-school contests, these performances were carefully designed, supervised and rehearsed by appointed teachers. Participating pupils described these activities as 'fun' and 'interesting', even though they were required to spend more time and effort preparing for them. They felt motivated to learn the scripts, lyrics and dancing/Kung Fu movements in order to best represent the Chinese language and culture they had learnt. Apart from benefits for language learning, these activities helped these CHL pupils develop a sense of connection and even belonging to their familial ethnic and cultural origin. Kuan's use of 'our culture' demonstrated that

he identified himself as Chinese and submitted to the linguistic and cultural heritage he learnt and represented. Moreover, as Kuan said, through the performances they changed from being language learners to become promoters of their community language and culture for younger pupils. But it is also worth noting that only a limited number of students were chosen to perform in these inter-school performances. These selected students normally had higher language proficiency and more interest in learning Chinese language and culture. Hence, the majority of pupils, especially those with lower language proficiency, were left out of the most interesting activities.

In classroom teaching, the cultural activities that engaged all levels of pupils were highly valued, for example the lesson devoted to traditional Chinese paper-cuttings used as window decorations (剪窗花). Before lecturing on the topic, the teacher gave instructions for pupils to make their own paper-cut decorations. The craft-making activity not only provided a sense of active participation but also integrated language use for different levels of pupils. Pupils with lower language proficiency were asked to give simple instructions in Chinese for the paper cutting. More able pupils were asked to explain the history and cultural meanings of traditional paper-cut decorations. Moreover, the teacher taught pupils how to cut a snowflake pattern, which could also be used at Christmas. This cultivated a sense of relevance and intimacy of both Chinese language and culture among pupils by contextualising the traditional Chinese artefact in modern Britain.

However, teachers' explanations and contextualisation of these craft activities is a key factor in making children aware of interculturality when learning their heritage language and culture. For example, in my GCSE class, after the activity of 'making Chinese dumplings', the most popular food for the Chinese New Year festival, Jia (boy, aged 14) asked me 'Miss, do we have to eat dumplings in Chinese New Year? 'cause my family's never had dumplings at Chinese New Year'. He asked me because the text read aloud in the lesson described dumplings as a symbolic food of the Chinese New Year festivities in China. But in many parts of southern China, dumplings are not normally consumed at this time. Jia's family was originally from a village in Guangdong

province in southeast China. They often prepared their own regional cuisine to celebrate Chinese New Year rather than eating the 'symbolic' dumplings. This minor incident demonstrated that there was no single, monolithic Chinese culture. People in China are registered to different cultural groupings based on their age, gender, regional origin, work, social class, religion and ethnic background. But since teachers and schools mostly concentrate on the symbolic or representative cultural objects and rules, there is a danger of leading to the perpetuation of stereotypes.

The third kind of popular activity was discussions and debates about cultural topics. The discussion topics depended on the theme of the lessons in the textbook, such as food and dietary culture, parenting style, ethics and moral values, popular culture, and so on. Each discussion was situated within a carefully designed scenario that would encourage pupils to reflect on the meaning of 'Chinese culture' in their lives. Multimedia materials such as news reports, videos and photographs were used to prompt the discussion. The following are some topics discussed in my GCSE classrooms:

- Tiger mothers and eagle fathers: Media representations of Chinese-style parenting
- 'Little emperors and princesses' and study machines: Media representations of pupils in China
- Chinese popular music: Can the Chinese rap?
- The Chinese are coming: BBC documentary about the impact of the rise of China
- Festival: Chinese Spring festival and Christmas
- Classic Literature: Xi You Ji (Journey to the West) and Harry Potter

Since the topics were carefully chosen to relate to their current lives in Britain, most pupils were motivated to complete learning materials, engage in the discussion and use the target language to express their opinions. Eager to participate in the discussion, many pupils engaged in the group communication and debates by collaborating with group members, actively using translation tools and online background research. More importantly,

these activities encouraged them to reflect on their opinions and behaviours at the juncture of their cultural heritage, public discourses and real life experiences.

### ***Cultural activities are unnecessary***

The 'cultural knowledge contest' organised by UKAPCE for each of its member schools was the least favourite cultural activity among almost all of my respondents. The content of the assessment encompassed a wide range of topics including Chinese history, geography, literature, music, art, architecture, and artefacts, among others. The preparation materials for this contest provided useful cultural information and references for teachers, but the linguistic ability and background knowledge required to understand these topics far surpassed the level of CHL pupils in Chinese schools. It required a huge amount of effort and time from teachers to transform the cultural reading material into learner-suitable teaching content and activities. With a tight teaching schedule, many teachers would simply read the cultural knowledge material to pupils or skip the preparation for the contest altogether.

Furthermore, the annual cultural knowledge contest was carried out in the form of an exam paper with thirty 'yes or no' questions and seventy multiple-choice questions. To a certain extent, it was more a test of literacy than of knowledge, since the characters and written language used in the exam paper were difficult to understand for the majority of CHL pupils in Chinese schools. These questions were designed to check facts rather than individual understanding of Chinese culture. As Namjyu (boy, aged 15) said,

The cultural knowledge test is useless for me; I can't even understand the question... I'm still struggling with my GCSE - they won't test your cultural knowledge.

The main reason for this problem is the disconnection between the syllabi used in Chinese schools and appropriate assessment for learning Chinese as a CHL. The specific difficulty of integrating cultural activities is not the only consequence of this disconnection, as it also creates a problem for teaching in many Chinese complementary schools.

Similar to previous research studies (Francis et al., 2008; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009), this study found that a substantial number of pupils were not learning Chinese willingly but at their parents' request. Therefore, it was not surprising to receive the following responses from pupils:

To be honest, I'm really **not bothered** about what we do.

(Jake, aged 16)

I don't speak Chinese with my friends... **None of my friends are interested** in Chinese stuff.

(Wendy, aged 14)

Pupils like Jake and Wendy went to Chinese complementary schools to learn Chinese for two or three hours a week. They spent most of their time in mainstream schools learning different subjects and interacting with their peers in English. They would only use Chinese at home with their parents. Although Chinese parents valued Chinese language as a significant representation of their Chineseness, young Chinese CHL learners often failed to see the relevance of CHL learning in their lives and resisted their parents' efforts in CHL maintenance (Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). Similar to any other adolescents in British schools, they were more involved with the educational agenda and peer social interactions in mainstream schools. Chinese cultural activities would probably be the least of their concerns if they could not see the relevance of these activities to their lives.

This indifferent attitude towards participating cultural activities also corresponded to the general trend of fading passion for learning Chinese in Chinese complementary schools. Young children in junior years tended to have more enthusiasm for learning Chinese and were more likely to participate in cultural performances than older adolescents. The number of pupils also decreased significantly from junior years to senior years in almost every Chinese school. Many factors contributed to the decreasing enthusiasm of these adolescents: most of their friends did not share their interest in, or

obligation towards, learning Chinese; they refused to have their weekend leisure time taken up by Chinese schooling; academic pressure in mainstream schools increased with age and learning in Chinese school became more difficult to manage as a result.

### ***Cultural activities and negotiations of cultural identities***

Aiming to transmit cultural heritage values and products, Chinese schools employ Chinese cultural activities in order to strengthen pupils' connections with their familial ethnic and cultural origin and the surrounding Chinese community. But participation in these cultural activities and learning culture was far from a 'one-way' street. Rather it was a process of interculturality, in which pupils actively interpreted, negotiated and constructed their own understanding of Chinese culture and their own cultural identities. I present the following two incidents from my fieldwork.

The interview extract below with Kuan demonstrated his conflicted response to participating in Chinese cultural activities:

Interviewer: I saw you participated in many performances in Chinese school.

Kuan: That's my Mum, **that's not me**.

Interviewer: But I think you did very well on stage.

Kuan: **I don't have a choice**, so I might as well put some effort in it.

Interviewer: So do you think the performance is interesting?

Kuan: Err, yeah.

Interviewer: I like the one you performed last year, singing the song adapted from Beijing opera.

Kuan: Oh, well, **I've lost my last shred of dignity**.

Interviewer: Why do you say that? I thought you found it interesting.

Kuan: It's just, the performance, it's so **dated**, I would never agree to do that at my English school.

Field notes, extracted from my teaching in a GCSE classroom, detail my impressions of a comparable example of cultural conflict:

I asked my pupils to choose a song for the whole class to sing in the annual school performance. I suggested a few traditional Chinese folk songs. They were unhappy about my suggestions because they had sung those songs many times. They also complained that the choice of songs was always very limited. Zhiming, who migrated to Britain six months ago, suggested that we sang a Chinese song containing Chinese rap, which was very popular among young people in China at that time. Johanna, who was British born, immediately vetoed the idea: *'What? Chinese people can't rap!' 'Yeah, Chinese rap is crap,'* Nick added. Zhiming and four other newly migrated students obviously felt very offended by the negative remarks. They started to attack the school performances as being old-fashioned and boring. They begged me to play the song on the computer. So I did. The five newly migrated pupils must have loved that song because they knew the lyrics by heart and sang along with the music. The rest of the pupils had never heard the song before. But many of them liked it immediately. Nick was still not convinced, *'It is so not rapping, you were supposed to swear and stuff, not just talk.'* Nevertheless, they chose that song for their performance. In the next two weeks, surprisingly, all the pupils, even the less motivated learners, made an effort to learn the lyrics and the rapping elements. I guess being able to rap in Chinese is something that would make them feel 'cool'.

The interview with Kuan showed that he felt somehow embarrassed about his performance even though his team won a prize in the UKAPCE annual Spring Festival show. As an active participant in various cultural activities, Kuan gave very positive feedback about how drama performances helped language learning and promoted Chinese culture (see Page 253). But in this instance, he repeatedly emphasised that his Chinese opera singing performance was



‘not him’ and ‘he’d never agree to do it’ in front of friends at his English school. He was determined to disconnect himself from his own ‘dated’ cultural representations on stage. Such feelings revealed the difficulties he had identifying with the cultural activities that were chosen and prepared against his wishes. But he had ‘no choice’ because he was the most suitable candidate for the singing performance. He did not want to disappoint his teacher or his mother. Cultural activities are designed to make CHL learners feel comfortable and proud of their own language and cultural backgrounds, especially under the pressure of linguistic and cultural conformity in mainstream school. But the fact that he wanted to hide his performance from his school friends showed that this cultural activity failed to give him the confirmation he needed most, that from his peer group.

In the second example, schools and teachers provide limited choices for cultural performances. They tend to fixate on the traditional and static heritage of Chinese culture and lose sight of the on-going changes in contemporary Chinese culture, especially youth culture. In this regard, newly migrated pupils have certainly refreshed their understanding of the lives of Chinese young people in contemporary China. The ‘Chinese can’t rap’ debate showed that the majority of British-born and raised children have preconceived views about Chinese art forms as dated and static; furthermore, they have stereotypical identifications of what Chinese ‘can or cannot’ do. Despite their preference for consuming culturally hybrid transnational media products (as discussed in Chapter 7), the inclination to only recognise the traditional Chinese art forms and lifestyles as representations of Chinese culture was also shown in Chapter 6. But the recently arrived young people challenged these preconceptions and connected them to contemporary Chinese youth culture. The popular elements of youth culture, rap in this case, surpassed linguistic and ethnic differences and appealed to most young people living in metropolitan London. Although the popular rap song is by no means a good example of Chinese cultural heritage, it is nevertheless a product of cultural hybridity in China, which is an undeniable process in a global era. These young learners may identify with the hybrid forms of cultural products (or

activities) more easily and generate more interest in learning their CHLs and culture as a result.

It is important to recognise that pupils in Chinese complementary schools are not just ethnic Chinese who naturally have strong attachments to China. The majority of their education and socialization were completed in British school settings where they may feel under pressure when their linguistic and cultural backgrounds go unrecognised. Meanwhile, they are also under the influence of global youth culture. Therefore, cultural activities that instill a static and stereotypical image of Chinese culture may cause antipathy among these young learners. Alternatively, cultural activities that reflect both the hybridity of popular youth culture and traditional culture in modern China may stimulate more interest in learning.

#### **9.4 Chinese schools as social sites for Chinese in Britain**

Apart from teaching Chinese language, these schools also form a social space for British Chinese children and adults to meet and interact. Given the limited number of Chinese schools in London, a good Chinese school often attracts pupils from all over the city. For example, there were children travelling from south London or even places like Brighton and Kent to attend School N in North London. Since many children lived far from each other, they could only see their friends in Chinese school once a week. The majority of British Chinese interviewees cherished the opportunity to meet friends and listed it as the 'most enjoyable' (Johanna, aged 14) thing about Chinese school. To some, learning Chinese became a secondary purpose for attending Chinese school. As Wendy (aged 15) said, 'the only reason that keeps me getting up and coming to Chinese school on a Sunday is to see my friends.'

Interacting with Chinese friends was the main motivation for many parents and teachers to come to Chinese schools. Most teachers in Chinese complementary schools, especially teachers in leading positions, were parents who became involved because their children were learning Chinese there. Most parent-teachers would leave their teaching post when their own children stopped attending. However, there were still a few parent-teachers who

stayed on long after their children had left. They would attribute such dedication to their sense of attachment to the school or a sense of obligation to transmit Chinese language and culture to the next generation. These teachers often developed a strong commitment to the teaching role and to their colleagues. As Miss Fan said,

这么多年我在这里和一些老师成了很好的朋友，我还来中文学校的一大原因就是来这里和他们见见面，聊聊天。

All these years I became very close friends with some teachers here, one of the most important reasons I still come here is to see them and chat with them.

Since most families travelled long distances to school, some Chinese schools (such as School N and E) provided one or two classrooms for parents to stay in while their children were having lessons. The parents' rooms became a social site where friendships were formed, parenting experiences were exchanged, and home-cooked dishes were shared. Although some schools (such as School S and W) did not allow parents to stay on site, many parents still met up in small groups in cafés near the school. As I noticed in my observations of the parents' rooms of School N, these small, self-formed parent groups illustrated the differences and segregations in the subgroups of the Chinese community. There was only one parents' room in school N when I started my fieldwork. Chinese mothers often gathered around, shared homemade food and snacks and chatted with each other in Mandarin. A few mothers from Hong Kong and Guangdong frequently switched their conversations between Cantonese and Mandarin. Most of their conversations centred on their children, but also involved topics ranging from holiday plans, cookery and household tips to property investment. Most Chinese fathers worked on their laptops or tablets and only joined the conversation very briefly. Non-Chinese parents, as a minority in the parents' room, were often left out because they did not understand Mandarin and very few Chinese parents tried to engage them in conversations in English. Many of these Mandarin-speaking parents in School N had migrated to the UK as students in

the 1990s, later settling and working as professionals in academia, law, medicine, and finance.

During my fieldwork in School N, an increasing number of Fujianese families started to join School N (see discussions of Chinese migration trends in Britain in Section 2.2). Most of the parents from these families were workers in Chinese restaurants, clothing shops and construction companies with limited knowledge of English. Some came to Britain as illegal immigrants and later secured a permit for residence. These Fujianese parents often stayed together and talked in their Min (閩) dialect, which was largely incomprehensible to the Mandarin or Cantonese speakers. Although the Fujianese parents could speak Mandarin, they very rarely interacted with other Mandarin-speaking parents who were well-educated professionals. As the parents' room was mainly occupied by Mandarin-speaking parents, the group of Fujianese parents were forced out, clustering in the staircase and corridors during lesson time. The management team of School N had to open another classroom 'just for Fujianese parents' (Ms. Lin, head teacher in School N). Thus, the parents automatically divided themselves into sub-groups based on their country or region of origin, socio-economic status, migratory experiences and languages/dialects.

The segregation of sub-groups also extended to pupils of Chinese schools. As stated in Section 9.2, in the GCSE classroom of School N, there was a mixed group of British Chinese pupils including British-born and/or raised Chinese, newly arrived from China, mixed-race Chinese and non-Chinese. The majority of the newly migrated children were from Fujianese families. They were left behind at a young age to be looked after by their grandparents in China when their parents came to Britain to find work. Once their parents had gained legal residency, they came to Britain to be reunited with their parents, whom they had not seen since they left China, and their siblings, who were born and raised in Britain. These families sent their Chinese-educated, teenage left-behind children to GCSE/A-level class and their British-born younger children in Year 1 or 2 to Chinese schools. The left-behind children not only faced challenges as new immigrants at school, but also needed to adjust to family

life with unfamiliar parents and British-born siblings. Some of the children in this study were frustrated by the difficulties they had to face academically and socially at school. At the same time they failed to find support from their families, in which they felt just like an ‘外人’ (intruder) (Min, girl, aged 15). Further studies and social support are needed for this group of formerly left-behind migrant children.

For these migrant children, Chinese schools became a very important social site where they could meet and interact in their first language with other Chinese children who may share similar experiences. Chinese schools are conventionally presented as being ‘safe spaces’ from racism (Zhou & Li, 2003; Creese et al., 2006) as well as learning spaces within which like-minded, ‘love-learning’ Chinese pupils can escape from disruptive and disinterested peers in mainstream schools (Archer et al., 2009). However this study found the community social site as far from a ‘safe place’ from exclusion or ‘othering’. In Chinese school classrooms, the interactions among Chinese children of different backgrounds demonstrated the connections as well as the differences and tensions between subgroups within the Chinese community. On the one hand, British-born and/or raised children often complained that it was unfair for them to compete with their newly migrated peers in terms of Chinese language learning. As Johanna (aged 14) said,

There’s nothing to be proud of if he (a newly migrated Chinese) is good at Chinese, because he is Chinese; I’m not even a full Chinese.

The extent of ‘Chineseness’ was measured not only by race and blood, or linguistic ability, but also birthplace and living experiences. On the other hand, the newly settled Chinese children complained about the ‘bad behaviour’ of their British-Chinese classmates:

他们怎么这么不守规矩？就和我们学校那些学生一样，要是中国老师在，两巴掌就给你打下去了。

Why can't they [British-born/raised children] behave themselves?  
They are just like those students in my [English] school. If our  
Chinese teachers were here, they would have gotten a few  
slaps.

(Yin, girl, aged 18)

The stereotypical reference scales (British, British Chinese and Chinese) discussed in Chapter 8 were constantly used by these two groups of pupils to position (both connect and segregate) themselves in relation to one another. The uneasiness (discussed in Section 8.3.2) of the communication and interactions between these two groups also stemmed from these stereotypical views about each other. These two groups of children rarely interacted after lessons. A few pupils from these two groups tended to mock each other's accents and lack of knowledge about Britain or China respectively. Sometimes they got into arguments with one group using Mandarin and the other group using English. But through these debates and conflicts, they started to see each other's perspectives, recognised their ethnic connections and shared interests as young people, and most importantly, accepted the diverse interpretations and representations of 'British Chinese identity' (see the example of singing a Chinese rap song in Section 9.3.2).

## **9.5 Conclusion**

This chapter addressed part of the second research question by investigating the schooling experiences of British Chinese young people and their relationship with the construction of cultural identities in the context of Chinese complementary schools. It firstly outlined the development and challenges in teaching Chinese as a CHL in Chinese complementary schools. One of the biggest pedagogical challenges for teaching Chinese as a CHL is to cater for CHL learners with a wide range of linguistic abilities, motivations, attitudes, needs and objectives. Their diverse sociolinguistic backgrounds play an important role in shaping these needs and goals. Unfortunately, neither the current Chinese as a foreign language syllabus (GCSE/A-level curriculum) nor the existing Chinese as a CHL syllabus used in these Chinese schools have been adapted to address the needs of the heterogeneous group of learners. In

addition, teachers have not been prepared or trained to deal with the changing and diverse population they encounter in the intercultural classroom.

This study has investigated pupils' experiences of participating in Chinese cultural activities and learning about Chinese culture in Chinese complementary schools. The findings disclosed the benefits and problems of existing cultural activities in Chinese complementary schools. The importance of interculturality has long been appreciated in second-language learning and educational policies. But such discussions have not been fully recognised in teaching CHL languages. Since the aim of the Chinese CHL schools are to 'preserve' or 'maintain' Chinese culture, some of the existing cultural activities tended to accentuate and ossify certain aspects of 'traditional Chinese culture' and downplay the changing and hybrid nature of 'culture'.

The findings suggest that many of these young people learn about their heritage culture as part of a process of acquiring an intercultural sensitivity and awareness. It not only means that they are able to appreciate cultural artefacts and perform cultural customs: more importantly, they can internalize and negotiate cultural norms and values in relation to their own living experiences; 'question the implicit and explicit assumptions behind cultural claims and the power dynamics that they may be concealing' (Briedenbach & Nyíri, 2009, pp. 343-345; Dervin & Hahl, 2014, p. 98); and finally actively (re)construct their multi-faceted cultural identities.

To a certain extent, Chinese complementary schools have served the purpose of maintaining and even strengthening the transnational ties between the younger generation British Chinese and their ethnic and cultural origin. But there also needs to be an honest recognition that Chinese schools are far from being homogenous, 'idealized' learning spaces. There are segregations and tensions among different groups of students based on their places of birth, family backgrounds, or even the length of time they have lived in the UK. Although they may be involved in the same process of engaging in transnational activities, such as learning Chinese, participating in Chinese cultural activities and interacting with Chinese people, they do not subscribe to

a uniform understanding of their ethnic origin, their heritage language and culture and their identification as British Chinese. The transnational ties and references to ancestral origin are only meaningful when they are constantly transformed and recontextualised in the current lives of British Chinese young people.

These findings also contribute some pedagogical implications to the limited literature on CHL education in community language schools. The professional development of CHL teachers needs to reflect the challenges posed by the diverse linguistic and cultural demands of pupils. Networking opportunities among CHL teachers as well as with modern foreign languages teachers would be beneficial for exchanging expertise and enhancing mutual learning. In moving forward, the need for responsive and flexible pedagogical approaches that respond to the needs of pupils is evident. As valuable resources for teaching Chinese as a CHL, more cultural activities need to be carefully designed and fully utilized. Teachers, schools, communities and education researchers need to develop a series of cultural activities that not only transmit Chinese heritage but also closely relate to young people's lives in a multicultural society. Furthermore, educational researchers need to explore a wide range of research topics in the emerging field of CHL education in order to improve the teaching of Chinese as a CHL. In this way, CHL education can achieve its ultimate goal to motivate CHL learners, enable them to better understand aspects of their linguistic and cultural heritage in relation to their lives and identities, and finally realize the full potential of their bilingual and bicultural background for their future prospects.



## **Chapter 10**

### **Past, Present and Future**

#### **10.1 Introduction**

Chapters 6 to 9 have examined the cultural identities of British Chinese young people from their lived experiences in different arenas. This chapter discusses the results of three questions that had been put forward to British Chinese respondents: 'Where are you from?', 'Who do you identify yourself with: British, Chinese, British Chinese or other?', and 'What is it like being British Chinese young people in Britain?' Their answers, and the ways in which they answered these questions, correspond to or contradict some of the findings in previous chapters, reflecting the complex process of negotiating cultural identities. This chapter also addresses the third research question by investigating the self-positioning and progress for the future of these young people.

#### **10.2 Past: Where are you from?**

'Where are you from?' is a simple question, but it is always 'hard to answer' (Julia, aged 17) for the majority of young British Chinese interviewees. In order to detect their changing positioning in different contexts, I asked these interviewees to imagine that they were in China or Britain to see how they would respond to the same question. These young people provided different and even contrasting answers. More interestingly, their answers changed according to the conditions they attached to this simple question, such as the geographic locations in which they placed themselves, the person who asked the question, and 'how the question is asked' (Simon, aged 14). The question of origin was understood in many different ways, such as 'Where do you live?'; 'What is your ethnic origin?'; 'What is your ethnicity?'; 'Where are your parents from?'; 'What is your nationality?'; 'Where were you born?' and most importantly, 'Who are you?'. For these children, 'where are you from' was no longer a question about geographical location, but a question about family history, their experiences and identities. Table 8 categorizes the answers given by interviewees into seven types.

Where are you from?	Imagine if it were asked in Britain	Imagine if it were asked in China
1.	China	Britain
2.	They expect me to say China, but I'm not. I was born here (UK). (Julia, aged 17)	They wouldn't ask me, though, because I look Chinese if I don't speak. (Zhengyi, boy, aged 15)
3.	Britain, or specific region in Britain, such as London and Kent	China or specific region in China, such as Beijing and Hong Kong
4.	I will always say China, because I was born there. (Yunke, girl, aged 14)  Britain, because I'm a British citizen, although technically I'm Chinese. (David, aged 18)	
5.	I'm from the UK and China. (Ke, girl, aged 14)  I was born here, and ethnically I'm Chinese. (Kenny, aged 18)	
6.	All my family is from China, but I was born in England. (Ming, boy, aged 14)  I was born and raised in England, but ethnically I'm Chinese. (Josie, aged 15)	
7.	I am half Indian and half Chinese. (B3-GE)  I'd say I am British Chinese mixed race. (B2-AN)  I was born in France. My father is Vietnamese and my mother is Malaysian Chinese (G2-GS).  I was born in China... My adopted parents are white British. (Nicole, aged 15)	

**Table 8: Interviewees' answers to 'where are you from?'**

The first type of response indicates a sense of difference from the geographic locations in which the question was asked. This sense of difference can also be found in type two answers, where the differences mainly reflected others' expectations. In Britain, these British Chinese interviewees were often seen as originating from China because of their looks and family background. In China,

they were often seen as coming from abroad owing to the ways in which they talk and behave, and their family's migration history. Interviewees in type one satisfied the inquirers' expectations to see them as 'others', whereas respondents in type two showed their resistance to be seen as 'others'. Answers in type three emphasised the 'sameness' of people within the geographic locations in which the question was asked. The respondents in this group tried to maintain their image as 'local' in both Britain and China. As Gang (boy, aged 16) said, 'I just want to make sure that people don't see me as from overseas'. These respondents believed that their experiences, linguistic ability and knowledge of both Britain and China enabled them to 'flip [their identities] depending on the circumstances' (Gang). However, when they listed their reasons for wanting to be seen as local in both Britain and China, their positioning in relation to these two places became clear. The reasons for being seen as local in Britain were mainly about ensuring better integration with British society by making friends easily at school, having more and better communication with British people, and differentiating themselves from 'annoying Chinese tourists' (G2-AN). The purpose of being seen as local in China was mainly defined from a tourist's point of view, often to avoid being 'ripped off' by Chinese shops. Respondents in type four located their ambiguous origin in fixed and concrete acknowledgement of the facts of one's identity, such as birthplace or nationality. Types five, six and seven avoided providing 'either/or' answers but tried to combine elements from both places. The use of 'and' in type five showed a sense of belonging in both places. The respondents in this group expressed their attachment to both China and Britain: they believed that they could be both Chinese and British. The use of 'but' in type six, on the other hand, signified a sense of distance from both places, suggesting they are neither completely 'here' nor 'there'. Type seven represented the more complicated picture this question may provoke for mixed-race children, children with multiple migration experiences and adopted Chinese children. Geographical or political locations, no matter whether this is birthplace, current place of residence, parents' homeland or nationality, were insufficient reference to answer the question about origins. Rather, their experiences with the relevant locations determined their origins and shaped their understanding of their current state of being. For B3-GE and G2-GS,

retrieval of their ancestral past and homeland was redefined and re-experienced through the different categories and labels they had been given, whether British-born Indian Chinese, French-born British, or raised by Vietnamese-Malaysian Chinese. Children like Nicole, who had been abandoned and neglected by her birth parents in China, bear little attachment, and even expressing resentment towards their 'homeland'. 'I'm really happy with my parents, here is my home' said Alice (aged 14), who was also adopted by a white British family from a Chinese orphanage: 'I have no desire to go to China or look for my Chinese parents.'

Many respondents in Parker's (1995) study reported feeling attached to Hong Kong, but not China, as their 'homeland'. But participants in this study did not show a strong distinction in identifying with Hong Kong or China. Overall, as the majority of the interviewees (20 out of 29) identified Britain as their 'home', they display a relatively weak tie to their parents' homeland, no matter whether it is Hong Kong, different regions in China, or places outside of the Chinese mainland. For example, Gabby (aged 15) always felt she was from China because she was always the only Chinese girl in her class, even though she had been born in the UK. But as she grew older, she felt she could not consider China as her real home: 'China is where my parents grew up, that will be their home,' as she said, 'but here [Britain] is really my home.' Their answers to questions about their origin and belonging have changed and will continue to change according to 'what is most advantageous for them under the circumstances' (Joseph, aged 18). For example, Julia (aged 17) would provide different answers depending on the person who asked the question. 'If I know the person, I will explain', she said, 'if I don't trust the person, I will just say I'm local'. The various answers about their past demonstrated that these British Chinese young people tried to make sense of their past and locate their identities through their experiences and understanding of the present. Therefore, this exploration of the meanings of origin is not a reproduction of ancestral memories of another place but a constant transformation of the 'past' shaped by the experiences and identities of the present.

### **10.3 Present: Who are you?**

#### **10.3.1 Self-identification: are you British, Chinese, British Chinese or other?**

Participants of this study were asked to choose the terms that best describe them: Chinese, British, British Chinese or other with specifications. These choices were not mutually exclusive and they were allowed to choose more than one answer. In the questionnaire survey, more than two thirds (70 out of 101) of the participants defined themselves as British Chinese, less than one third (27 out of 101) perceived themselves as Chinese and only four as British. Six participants provided answers in the 'other' category. The alternative answers they provided were 'Korean', 'Singapore Chinese', 'British Malaysian Chinese' (two), 'French' and 'not sure'. Gender, age and duration of study in Chinese school had little impact on this pattern of self-identification. Birthplace and nationality, however, had a strong influence on the self-identifications of the participants. While the British-born participants maintained the same pattern as the whole sample, over two thirds (12 out of 17) of the Chinese-born (including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) saw themselves as Chinese, five saw themselves as British Chinese and none chose 'British' as their identity. Similarly, while the British passport holders maintained the same pattern of self-identification as the whole sample, two thirds (10 out of 15) of the Chinese passport holders defined themselves as Chinese, five as British Chinese and none 'British'. Participants who had lived in the UK for more than ten years (regardless of whether they were British-born) shared the same pattern of identification as the whole sample. Of the sixteen participants who lived in the UK for between five to ten years, nine perceived themselves as Chinese, four saw themselves as British Chinese, three as other and only one as British. All participants who had lived in the UK for less than five years identified themselves as Chinese rather than British or British Chinese. The quantitative data demonstrated that the majority of the participants described themselves as 'British Chinese'. While most of them recognised 'Chinese' as part of their identities either in 'British Chinese' or as just 'Chinese', few would describe themselves as only 'British'. Fixed political and territorial markers, such as nationality and birthplace, still influence the self-identifications of a number of participants. As their experiences of living in the UK accumulate,

participants were more likely to consider elements of being 'British' as part of their identities.

The qualitative data collected in the focus group and in-depth interviews were in line with the quantitative data. Indeed, 27 out of the 29 interviewees identified themselves as British Chinese. The Chinese-born interviewees Ming (girl, aged 14), Ying (girl, aged 18) and Peter (boy, aged 17), who had migrated to Britain eight or nine years before, perceived themselves as Chinese. Kuan (boy, aged 17) was the only one who would call himself 'British' because he thought he did not 'have any ties to China'. This study also asked those who identified themselves as British Chinese to specify and weigh the Chineseness and Britishness in their lives and identities. Two thirds of the respondents believed aspects of Britishness and Chineseness took equal weight in their lives and identities. Others had contrasting views on this issue: some claimed that Britishness was more important to them and represented up to ninety per cent of who they are, whereas others intimated they were ninety-five per cent Chinese and the five per cent exposed to the British environment would not 'change the core' (Jake, aged 16) of their identities.

This study also explored the ways in which these participants described the meanings of Britishness and Chineseness in their lives. Participants often used fixed physical characteristics and territorial boundaries as markers of their identities. As B1-AW said,

The outside is completely Chinese, the inside is completely British.

The Chineseness was represented by their 'blood', 'appearances', 'birthplace' and 'ethnicity'; the Britishness was often linked to 'nationality', 'birthplace' and 'place of residence'. To some, Chineseness meant heritage, family origin and the past, whereas Britishness meant their lifestyle, current surroundings and the present. Some thought their blood and the past determined who they were and their lifestyle and surroundings were superficial. As Kenny (aged 18) said,

'We are just Chinese living in the British way.' Some believed their heritage only had a minor inflection in their lives while present ways of thinking and living defined who they were. As Gang (boy, aged 16) said,

虽然我父母对我有一定的影响，但是大部分时间我还是在英国这个社会里长大的，所以我的文化是英国的文化而不是中国的。

Although my parents have certain influences on me, most of the time I am living in British society. So my culture is British culture, not Chinese.

Many interviewees defined their Chineseness and Britishness in terms of aspects of their lives rather than the past and present timescale. Chineseness is inward and private, and mainly restricted to their homes and Chinese schools, encompassing experiences such as living with Chinese parents, watching Chinese TV programmes, eating Chinese food, and learning Chinese language; whereas Britishness is outward and public, which is prominent when they are in mainstream schools, with their friends and 'going out socializing' (Wendy, aged 15). Others, however, believed it was the other way round, because it was the differences between each sphere of their lives that marked out their identities. As David (aged 18) said, 'when I go to school, people see us as Chinese. At home my Mum always complains that I am too lazy, like the British'. A few also used their fluency in language and their interest and knowledge of culture as markers of their Britishness or Chineseness. Rachel (aged 16), for example, believed she was more Chinese than her other British Chinese friends because she was 'more interested in Chinese culture and music' and she spoke better Chinese. Gang, on the other hand, had lived in London since he was five, spoke fluent Chinese, and travelled to and lived in China every year like a 'native Chinese'. He believed his identities were the choices he made. As he said, he could 'flip sides' in different contexts, but he identified British culture as his own (see quotes above). In their answers, these interview respondents seemed to describe the identities of British Chinese in an essentialized way – identity was either located in a geographical place, a political territory, a racialized body, a series

of ancestral memories, or an enclosed linguistic or cultural system. As Ang puts it, it is in situations like these that 'the notion of race continues to thrive in everyday life, where race theories operate in practice as popular epistemologies of ethnic distinction, discrimination, and identification – which are often matched by more or less passionate modes of self-identification' (Ang, 1998, p. 239). However, as shown in Chapter 8 and Chapter 9, in their everyday lives, no matter whether in mainstream schools, Chinese schools or at home, they incorporated and used essentialized concepts of the 'British', 'Chinese' and 'British Chinese' to justify their opinions and behaviour, but at the same time negotiated and challenged these concepts constantly. After all, these names were just 'tags', as Ke (girl, aged 14) said, they could not 'show your opinions and who you are.' This disjuncture of data proved that in order to understand the cultural identities of British Chinese young people, it is necessary to move beyond abstract categorizations, and examine detailed accounts of their everyday lives.

### **10.3.2 What is it like being British Chinese young people?**

In Chapter 6 to 9, this study demonstrated the emergence and transformations of British Chinese identities in different spheres of young people's lives. This section shows how interviewees described their lives as British Chinese young people in London. The majority of the interviewees admitted that the Chineseness in their identity influenced their behaviours and distinguished them from their peers. Corresponding to results discussed in Chapter 8, the impact of Chineseness is often related to high parental expectations in academic performance, stereotypes of 'model pupils' from teachers and peers, limited social time, and extra effort to 'blend in' to the young people's social environment. A small number of interviewees (7 out of 29) felt that there was little difference between British Chinese and other British people, because they had similar experiences of growing up, similar interest in popular culture, social media and games, and shared the same worries about exams and careers. Most importantly, they did not particularly feel that they 'stand out, because London is multi-cultural' (Ming, boy, aged 14). To them, being British Chinese should not affect their normal lives' or who they were as individuals.



Another common theme that emerged from their accounts was their frustration towards the ‘youth delinquency’ discourse from the perspective of British young people in general. Indeed, several of them recorded in their writing the hostile attitudes of adults, especially their parents, towards the way young people dress, talk and behave. For example, Lanke (girl, aged 13) wrote in her essay about her experiences of being a British Chinese young person,

There are many difficulties of being a young person in the UK. Adults, especially elderly people, are prejudiced towards us young people. They assume that young people dislike study, always take drugs, smoke and commit crimes. If they see a group of young people walking towards them, they will cross the road to the other side. If a group of young people gets on the bus or tube, they will just get off.

Although often thought of as the model ethnicity in school (see Chapter 8), British Chinese young people also experienced a ‘烦恼又可怕的青少年阶段, troubled and dreadful adolescence’ (Yunke, girl, aged 14). Like many British young people, they share a youth culture or lifestyle related to social networking, fashion, music, new technology, games and so on, face pressure from their exams, feel uncertain about the future, anxious about their peer social interactions, and are resistant to the stereotype of ‘troubled’ youth.

## 10.4 Future

### 10.4.1 Would you live and work in Britain or China in future?

The majority of the British Chinese young interviewees reported that they would prefer to live and work in Britain in the future, but also maintained the possibility of working and living in China. Some of these respondents saw

Britain as their home and the place where they will continue to belong. Britain was the place where they had spent most of their lives and had many valuable friendships. Some of these respondents still saw themselves as ‘outsiders’ and believed racism was unavoidable because of their ethnicity in Britain. As Kuan (boy, aged 17) said, ‘there’s always gonna be some sort of subconscious racism because when it comes to jobs, people are more likely to hire people within their own race because they trust them inherently.’ Positioning themselves as minorities, many still believed ‘it is going to be a lot easier because London is a multicultural city and people accept them (us) more’ (Zhengyi, boy, aged 15). Meanwhile, their justifications for working and living in China were always surrounding the discourse of the rise of China as a global superpower. As Gang (boy, aged 16) said, ‘I think China is going to be part of the future no matter whether you like it or not, because its economy was growing and it will become a superpower influencing everyone’s life.’ They perceived their linguistic and cultural heritage as a form capital to advance their future career (as discussed in Chapter 9). No matter whether they wanted to live in Britain or China, China and the Chineseness in one way or another as their cultural heritage, as part of their family history, or as the new power in the world, had shaped many aspects of their future choices. While acknowledging the impact of the changing ‘homeland’, it is necessary to note that such impact on the lives of migrants’ children did not, for the most part, derive from any sense of these young people ‘belonging to the homeland’. Rather, these second- or subsequent generation migrant young peoples’ identifications, connections and investment in relation to the ‘homeland’ were conditioned by their current living experiences and social status; motivated by their aspirations to achieve social mobility and acculturation; and contested by the ways in which they were perceived in the country of residence.

#### **10.4.2 What are your career choices?**

As discussed in Chapter 8, Chapter 9 and elsewhere (Archer & Francis, 2007; B. Wong, 2015), many British Chinese pupils and their parents exhibit high aspirations in education. These aspirations are routinely manifested in terms of progressing onto higher education, favouring academic subjects such as

mathematics, IT and sciences – which are more likely to lead to middle-class professional careers such as finance, medicine and IT – and learning Chinese language as a form of capital for future career success. In the reports released by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in the past five years (HESA, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015), the most popular degree subjects for UK-domiciled Chinese undergraduate students are mathematical sciences, medicine and dentistry, computer science and business studies, with British Chinese students constituting a relatively high percentage of the population in these subjects even though they make up just 0.8 % of undergraduates overall (see Table 9). This figures are fairly consistent across the years.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
<b>Mathematical Sciences</b>	2.5%	2.6%	2.4%	2.4%	2.3%
<b>Medicine and Dentistry</b>	2.3%	2.2%	2.3%	2.1%	2.2%
<b>Computer Science</b>	1.4%	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%
<b>Business Studies</b>	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%
<b>Engineering</b>	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%
<b>Total-All students</b>	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%

**Table 9: UK domiciled Chinese undergraduate students by subject area from 2011 to 2015 (HESA)**

The same tendencies are reflected in the career choices of the respondents in this study. The majority of the interviewees reported that they would like to pursue jobs with professional skills and relatively stable and good income such as finance, medicine, law and IT. Several respondents who originally wanted to study art, design or psychology in university, had soon been ‘guided back’ (Ms. Chan) by their parents onto the ‘safer career routes’. As Ms. Yu said,

艺术文学啊，作为兴趣是好的，但是不能当饭吃。我认识多少中国的小孩弹琴很有天赋自己也喜欢,但是他们都不会挑这个做专业... 如果我的孩子要做艺术家，那我宁愿他去厨房学炒锅。

Art and literature, as hobbies they are OK, but they can't feed you. I've seen Chinese children with extreme talent and passion in playing the piano. They would still not choose it as a career... If my children want to be artists, I'd rather they learned how to stir-fry working in restaurants.

After a long and difficult period of negotiations with their parents, three of the British Chinese young people in this study managed to keep their passion for art as part of their potential career plans. Ying (girl, aged 18) took an interior design course in a further education college, Kuan (boy, aged 17) entered a university course on game design and Kenny (boy, aged 18) chose to study architecture.

Politics is rarely seen as a viable career route by British Chinese families (Archer & Francis, 2007). Many studies have reported that the problem of social exclusion among the first-generation Chinese immigrants in Britain has resulted in low civic participation (Chau & Yu, 2001; Benton & Gomez, 2008). A more recent study finds that the descendants of Chinese immigrants are twice as unlikely to engage in any form of civic participation as their majority white peers. More importantly, factors like gender, age and level of education have almost no impact on the pattern of low civic participation (Dustmann & Frattini, 2011). In this study, none of my participants intended to pursue politics as their choice of career. For most of the respondents, the only community activity in which they participated was attending Chinese schools. Only two of the respondents reported that they had been involved in political action or engaged in local community activities. Apart from personality, many of them believed that the main factor contributing to this disinterest or even avoidance of politics was their parents' views and behaviour regarding politics. Some Chinese parents were reported as warning their children to stay away from the 'complicated and dangerous' (Gabby, aged 15) world of politics

because of their parents' own experiences of political turmoil in China. Some Chinese parents showed very little interest in British political issues, because they still considered themselves as visitors in Britain. As Kuan (boy, aged 17) commented,

As far as the first generation is concerned, they are still Chinese, all that matters is what's going on back home. As to what's happening here is simply... It's their country. Let them deal with it.

Although the majority of British Chinese young people in this study perceived Britain as their home, many of them were often reminded by their parents that they were minorities in Britain and their primary task was to get good grades and find 'less risky' jobs. Following their parents' advice, a few respondents expressed that they only wanted to 'keep heads down' (Peter, aged 17) and 'live their own lives' (Julia, aged 17), as they 'don't wanna get too involved into another country's political system' (Kenny, aged 18). As B2-AW said of his British Chinese peers,

I think Chinese students only care about what they get out of school for themselves; they don't care about anything else. They study for themselves, that's it.

Furthermore, British mainstream discourses and potential racism also contributed to British Chinese young people's lack of interest in political involvement and civic participation. Many participants expressed a lack of confidence in Chinese people involved in British politics owing to the 'subconscious racism in Britain' (Kuan, boy, aged 17) and the political differences between British and Chinese nations. As Kuan explained,

How many people would vote for a Chinese person to represent the party because there will be accusations of how can a Chinese person understand British culture, how can they understand how our lives operate, how do they know what's

best, and you know, (laugh) there will be idiots accusing [them] of trying to bring communists back to Britain. You just can't win against it. So the better alternatives would be going into banking, or becoming doctors and accountants.

The lack of political integration of British Chinese immigrants and their descendants may be attributable to many factors: such as the perception of 'politics equals trouble', the quiet and 'being well-behaved' expectations from parents (see Section 8.3.4), the aspiration of achieving social mobility through limited career options and the acceptance of prejudiced discourses against Chinese in Britain. Future research is needed to further explore the reasons for this disengagement as well as the necessary actions that are required to enhance the civic awareness and participation of the British Chinese community.

#### **10.4.3 Would your ideal partner be someone of Chinese descent?**

In this study, about two thirds of the interviewees would prefer someone of Chinese descendant as their future partner. 'It makes sense and is more natural' (Kenny, aged 18) because they felt spouses with a similar ethnic background could communicate better with each other linguistically and culturally. The rest of the interviewees expressed that they did not have a preference regarding the ethnicity of their future partners. However, twenty-three interviewees reported that their parents had given explicit instructions or inexplicit suggestions that they should marry an ethnic Chinese person. As Jake (aged 16) said, 'If you think the British are racist, I think the Chinese are the most racist. My father wants me to find a Chinese wife, white is acceptable, but not black. He said he's going to break my legs if I find a black girlfriend'. Their parents often explained such a racist scale of preference in terms of cultural compatibility. Ms. Yu used cooking as an example to illustrate how inconvenient it would be if her children's partners were not ethnic Chinese (see Section 6.2.3.). As Mrs. Chan said,

这是一个文化的问题。中国人文化相通最容易沟通，白人呢比较包容能尊重你的文化，但是黑人的文化和中国的文化就很不同了，不重视教育，成天毒品阿暴力阿。

It's a question of culture. Chinese are easiest to communicate with because you share the same culture. White people are liberal and tolerant and they can respect your culture, but black culture is very different from Chinese culture, they don't value education, they do drugs and are violent all the time.

Ms Chan's account reflected the racist discourses and ethnic stereotypes within the British Chinese community as well as British mainstream society. More strikingly, these parents instilled and justified their argument to their children in terms of cultural differences without awareness of its hidden, and sometimes overt, racism. This discourse was transformed and used by the British Chinese young respondents to explain their preference for ethnic Chinese as their future partners. It calls for further attention and actions to raise the awareness of racism among Chinese in Britain, as victims as well as culprits.

#### **10.4.4 Interviewees revisited: Reflections after going to university**

Two years after I finished the data collection. I asked four British Chinese young people respondents, with whom I was still in touch, to talk about the changes in their lives after they finished their first year at university. Studying with the increasing number of Chinese overseas pupils in British universities, three of them felt they were able to 'reconnect with China' (Jake). 'I speak so much Chinese these days, willingly,' said Jake, expressing his changing attitudes from reluctance to acceptance in learning Chinese. He made friends with many overseas Chinese students in his university. His girlfriend was also a Chinese overseas student from the same region in China as his parents. Ying had become president of the college Chinese students' society, which had twenty members. Namjyu had secured a summer internship in an accounting firm in Hong Kong thanks to his 'bilingual skills and intercultural background'. These three respondents all recognised their close ties with

China and the importance of Chineseness in their lives in earlier interviews. They strengthened their ties to China through more interactions with overseas Chinese students and transnational activities. Joseph, on the other hand, had the opposite opinion about interacting with overseas Chinese students at his university. Although Joseph was born and educated in China before coming to Britain at the age of eight, he found it very hard to identify with some of the students from China. 'They always stick together, talking in Chinese,' said Joseph, 'they forget they are here to learn English... They don't care about studying, all they talk about is dining out and shopping with their parents' money.' He tended to avoid interactions with these overseas Chinese students because of their attitudes towards learning. 'They [Chinese overseas students] spend so much time playing Majiang<sup>35</sup> and online games and in the end they try to copy my work – no way.' The image of Chinese pupils as the model ethnicity in British schools, which formed part of their common schooling experience in Britain and shaped their identities as pupils, was dissolved or challenged in university settings when they faced their peers from China with diverse backgrounds. The contrasting attitudes towards their Chinese peers provides a complex picture of how these British Chinese young people position themselves in relation to their peers in Britain as well as those from China. Indeed, this is an area worth exploring in future research.

## **10.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed how British Chinese young people understand their own cultural identities in relation to their ethnic and cultural origins, present choices of identification and the possible directions for their future career and life progression. It also has raised directions and questions for further research. British Chinese young people interpreted the meaning of 'origin' in many different ways. The diversity of interpretations was owing to their different migration experiences, family backgrounds, personal experiences in both China and Britain and the acceptance of or resistance to stereotypes and discourses about Chinese in Britain. But their interpretations had one thing in common, which was that their perceptions of the 'past' were inevitably 'fractured' and constantly transformed by their current experiences and identifications. Similarly, their perceptions of and current experiences in



Britain and China shaped their self-identifications. Most British Chinese young interviewees recognised the importance of the perceived 'Britishness' and 'Chineseness' in their lives and identities. Their interpretations and weighing of this hyphenated British-Chineseness varied across time and in different contexts. The findings show that most British Chinese young people talked about their cultural identities in essentialized terms. This corresponds to earlier findings that they reproduce a scale of stereotypes within which to locate their own identifications (see Chapter 8). The constant and complex process of representing, creating and negotiating meanings of their cultural identities only came to the surface in their everyday life experiences. The perceived future for these British Chinese young people was still largely shaped by their perceptions of China, interpretations of mainstream discourses in Britain and their current social positions as descendants of migrants and the ethnic minority. However, their perceptions of the past, their current 'state of being', their strategies for and decisions about the future, and finally their cultural identities, were always in a process of perpetual 'becoming' according to changes to personal circumstances and the social, economic and political environments they inhabited.

## **Chapter 11**

### **Conclusion**

#### **11.1 Introduction**

This thesis has explored the (re)construction of cultural identities of British Chinese young people aged between thirteen and eighteen, in and around London, through their reflective narratives and lived experiences. More specifically, it investigates the strategic and temporary identifications of these young people in response to the intertwined forces of multiple discourses in different contexts. This interdisciplinary study has drawn upon a range of theories and concepts, such as diaspora, transnationalism, migration, habitus, discourse and interculturality, to construct the theoretical framework, inform the methodology and guide the analysis.

The investigation begins by examining the ways in which these British Chinese young people relate to their ethnic or cultural origins as presented through media discourses, in transnational experiences and through their own visual representations. Focusing on their social practice within the sphere of media and education, this study also interrogates the meanings of being British Chinese through their media consumption and experiences in mainstream and complementary Chinese schools. It finally presents how these young people perceive their positioning, prospects and difficulties in their future living in Britain. This thesis challenges the essentialized understanding of Chinese culture and Chinese identity. It also recognizes that the emergence of a British Chinese identity is subject to structural constraints such as gender, age and socio-economic status. This concluding chapter reflects on the key findings, and the conceptual and methodological tools employed in the study. It then considers the implications of this thesis and makes suggestions for future research and development.

#### **11.2 Key Findings**

Guided by the research framework established in Chapter 3, cultural identities are constructed within discourses and embodied in social practice. This thesis illustrates how British Chinese identities are constructed in a regime of

discourses in media and the educational sphere. It examines how young British Chinese position themselves in relation to the discourses regarding their cultural heritage, schooling experiences and sense of belonging. This thesis also discusses how British Chinese identities are represented and negotiated through a series of social practices. It investigates how these young people conform to as well as challenge some of the essentialist performance of 'Chineseness', such as the habitus of 'valuing education' and 'being well-behaved'; and the necessity of learning Chinese language and culture. It also explores whether and how the ethno-cultural background of British Chinese young people has influenced their consumption of media products and youth culture.

### **11.2.1 Imagining 'China and the Chinese'**

The first research question asked how British Chinese young people identify themselves, drawing on various discourses in relation to their ethnic and cultural origin. The respondents of this study generated various accounts and fluid positioning in relation to the imagined 'China and the Chinese', to which they may respond by identifying, protesting or remaining ambivalent (Chapter 6). Their perceptions of 'China and the Chinese' reflected their experiences of transnational activities, familial cultural upbringing and relevant dominant discourses in Britain. In their verbal accounts and visual representations of 'China and the Chinese', these young people often use the dominant public discourses about 'China and the Chinese' as a key point of reference to understand their ethnic and cultural origins and to make sense of their current experiences. They applauded the fast development of modern China and the increasing interconnectedness between China and Britain, and between China and the rest of the world. But they were strongly protective of the imagined traditional, oriental and exotic China. This finding suggests that, to young people who belong within a diaspora, the imagined 'homeland' is not merely fixed on one specific locality or real experiences in the place of origin. Instead, the symbolic significance of their family migratory past was understood and recreated in the process of negotiation between diasporic members and the dominant discourses in the place of settlement. As Brah (1996) has argued, it

is through these diasporic experiences that their cultural identities as diasporic members were formed.

However, when 'China and the Chinese' are presented and interpreted in essentialized terms in dominant media discourses, respondents tended to generate racist accounts that may either promote or discard a 'pure' Chinese identity. The discourses that accentuate particular aspects of 'Chineseness' provided imaginary resources and references for labelling Chineseness, either imposed by others or through self-identification. They may also become tools for 'othering' that create barriers for these young people to be accepted by others and by themselves as full members of British society.

### **11.2.2 'Model minority' in mainstream schools**

The second research question asked how the schooling experiences in mainstream schools and the cultural identities of British Chinese young people are shaped in the intertwined engagement of discourses. The prevalent discourses describing Chinese pupils as a model minority, which often refers to characteristics such as high academic achievement, intelligence, a hard-working attitude, compliancy and quietness, are reported by authors in Britain, America and many other research communities around the world (Archer & Francis, 2005b, 2006; Francis et al., 2008; B. Wong, 2015). British Chinese pupils in this study provided multi-layered interpretations of the discourse of 'model minority'. Many British Chinese pupils and parents accepted this stereotype of 'model minority' with a sense of ethnic pride since they believed it could result in advantageous capital in maintaining or achieving a positive ethnic image and desired social-economic status. But this study also revealed the frustrations and confusions that young participants had experienced, overshadowed by this 'othering' discourse of being a 'model minority' (Chapter 8). Ironically, these young participants resist such stereotyping discourses by reproducing stereotypes of both 'Chineseness', which signified the double meanings of diligent/geeky, well-behaved/boring, and 'Britishness', which entailed the opposite qualities of being lazy/fun, rebellious/inquisitive, in educational settings. Their flexible positioning as 'British Chinese' was realised by taking the best and avoiding the worst of both 'original' cultures.

This reproduction of stereotypes was also observed in their social interactions with their peers. Contrary to findings in Sham and Woodrow's study (1998), the majority of the British Chinese children in this study actively participated in after-school activities and their circle of friends were of various ethnicities. However, these young participants aptly identified three categories among their friends: the 'British', the 'British Chinese' and the 'fresh Chinese'. They often simultaneously distanced themselves from, or identified themselves with, both the 'British' and 'fresh Chinese'. These actions disclosed their fears of being 'different' or excluded from their peer groups. Thus, understanding hybrid identities as a simple cut-and-paste of two 'original' cultures becomes another discourse of racial exclusion and 'othering', because there is no singular, pure and fixed culture. Moreover, the hyphenated term 'British Chinese' does not itself entail a harmonious fusion (Ang, 2001) of cultures, because the hybridity of culture is also subject to power relations and cultural hegemony. The stories of Joseph and Min (See Section 8.3.4) demonstrated how British Chinese young people empowered or limited aspects of various conflicting discourses, when constructing their cultural identities, not only as British Chinese, but also as gendered young people from various social backgrounds. It also reflected the constant and complex interplay between active agency and structural forces in the process of identity formation.

Apart from dominant social discourses, discourses that are current and prevalent within the Chinese community also shape the perceptions and behaviours of many. Based on the accounts of British Chinese young people, the discourses of 'valuing education' and 'being well-behaved' (or dutiful and respectful) were so prominent among British Chinese families that they were constructed as essential aspects of Chinese identities by both British Chinese parents and children (Chapter 8). These discourses have been promoted across the Chinese diaspora as a strategy to achieve upward social mobility. This is also an example of where cultural values from the society of origin are utilized and strengthened in order to assist the survival and growth of a diaspora across generations in a new environment. These discourses were exemplified through a series of practices. British Chinese parents in this study

were reported by the young participants to have high parental expectations, substantial investment in and active involvement in their children's education, often with an emphasis on social competition. But it is also worth noticing that this discourse does not entail an equal appreciation of education in all subjects. Only a few subjects that may lead to 'less risky' career routes were strongly advocated by Chinese parents and children alike. Educational investment in learning musical instruments, sports and other enrichment activities were also carefully chosen and managed to serve the purpose of signifying the desired social status. These discourses and the ways in which they were transmitted through practice contributed towards forming a habitus among Chinese in Britain, which stemmed from both their cultural heritage and past migratory experiences. This served to guide their strategies and actions while also shaping the decisions they made and their future positioning.

Theoretically, the use of the concept 'habitus' is useful in understanding the phenomenon of academic success of British Chinese young people as a group. It helps to illustrate how aspects of ethno-cultural 'difference' are constructed through discourses, realized in practice and 'interpellated' into aspects of the assumed cultural identities. Young British Chinese have been reported to have narrow choices of certain university subjects, a preference for middle-class professional career routes and low civic participation. The concept of 'habitus' explains how these young people seem to be guided towards realizing their perceived positioning in Britain through practice (Chapter 11). While acknowledging the force of a habitus, this concept should not be used in essentialized terms as a fixed structure that defines identity. Rather, habitus of a group can vary in relation to other structural factors such as gender, class and sub-regions within a diasporic group. Categorizing identity through reinforced patterns of practice may create a sense of exclusion and restrict the future progress of British Chinese young people. The reflective accounts of respondents in this study demonstrated that habitus is fluid and constantly transforming as the experiences of the subject change across generations and contexts.

### **11.2.3 Schooling experiences in Chinese complementary schools**

Part of the second research question examines how the learning experiences and social interactions of the young participants in Chinese complementary schools contribute to the construction of their cultural identities. Learning Chinese language and culture is another practice that has been constructed as an essential part of performing Chinese cultural identity, by both Chinese and non-Chinese in Britain. As a new wave of Chinese migration saw an increasing number of Chinese from various backgrounds settle in Britain, many Chinese schools have experienced a rapid expansion in junior classes (Year 1-3) in the last few years. However, this study noticed a common trend of a decrease in the number of pupils, and diminishing interest in learning, from junior to senior years. This study presents the actions taken by Chinese complementary schools to meet the demands of a changing pupil population and also highlights the problems and pedagogical challenges in these schools. It analysed three main categories of pupils in one classroom and concluded that a simple mother-tongue or second language pedagogical model and assessment system is not appropriate to cater for pupils with a wide range of linguistic abilities, motivations, attitudes and objectives. The needs of the minority in the classrooms, such as mixed-heritage pupils, pupils who had no exposure to Chinese language outside of school, or pupils newly arrived from China, were often not appropriately addressed by the current syllabi used in Chinese schools and by teachers who lacked the professional training required to teach in intercultural classrooms.

This study also has provided an overview of the cultural activities organized by Chinese schools and national Chinese school associations. It has presented the benefits and problems of the existing cultural activities based on pupils' evaluations, my participant observations and teaching experiences. The majority of the existing cultural activities focused on the transmission of cultural knowledge, performance of cultural rituals and reproduction of cultural artefacts, which downplayed the changing and hybrid nature of 'culture'. Many cultural activities in these schools reflected an essentialized understanding of the Chinese cultural heritage, and further lead to a sense of disconnection and dis-identification with their ethnic and cultural origin among these young

people. Rather, pupils welcome those cultural activities that encourage them to relate the cultural values from previous generations to their current experiences; question the preconceived cultural claims and recreate their own understanding of their heritage culture. When complex and multiple cultures reproduce, hybridize and transform, young people acquire an intercultural sensitivity and the identities they develop become multi-faceted.

Meanwhile, this process is not free of structural restrictions or power relations. The social interactions of British Chinese young people and their parents in Chinese schools demonstrated the segregation and tensions among different sub-groups within the increasingly heterogeneous British Chinese community. Even within one diaspora, there exists social exclusion and discrimination based on other structural factors such as region of origin, educational background, socio-economic status, and gender. Nevertheless, the interactions among diverse groups of Chinese with their shared cultural heritage provided multiple possibilities of performing 'Chineseness' and constructing British Chinese cultural identities.

#### **11.2.4 Intersecting identities and media consumption**

This thesis has also investigated the cultural identities of British Chinese young people as consumers of global and transnational media products and youth culture (Chapter 7). British Chinese young people in this study used mainstream media in a similar way as the majority of British young people of similar age. Frequently, it appeared that their ethnic cultural backgrounds had not influenced their consumption of mainstream media as significantly as other structural factors such as gender and age. However, in some families, the lack of English language ability and media literacy skills among migrant parents may mean that they fail to support their children in avoiding or resolving online risks and harms.

In recent years, media products from China, Southeast Asia and all over the world are becoming increasingly hybrid by borrowing and incorporating popular styles and successful media production models. Participants in this study exhibited an interest in a variety of media products, regardless of



whether they were British, American, Chinese, or East Asian. Their consumption and preference for transnational media products was mainly based on personal taste revolving around global youth popular culture and influenced by commercialized media production. In terms of using ethnic Chinese media, the respondents displayed preferences limited to certain types of Chinese TV programmes (romantic comedies and martial arts dramas/films) and passive use of the internet as social tools in relation to China. For British Chinese young people who have an established attachment to China and Chinese culture, consuming ethnic media may serve to strengthen their transnational connections to the places of their ethnic and cultural origins. But contrary to the findings by Parker and Song (2007), there is insufficient evidence to suggest that the transnational media consumption and online activities of young British Chinese enables them to construct and project a unique and cohesive British Chinese identity.

The findings above demonstrate that individuals simultaneously hold multiple, overlapping and sometimes contradictory identifications. In the study of cultural identities, as suggested by the paradigm of interculturality, the focus should not merely be on ethno-cultural differences, but expand to other factors such as age, gender, occupational and social class. In this study, the ethno-cultural differences of British Chinese young people were enhanced in discourses in the field of education, whereas in their media consumption patterns, ethno-cultural background has less explanatory power than other structural factors such as age and gender. Thus, cultural identity may not only be understood as a state of being, which is subject to structural forces, power relations and the positions of a subject in the field at certain points in time. It can also be viewed as a process of becoming, constantly constructed by individuals through their negotiations with discourses, interactions with others and actions to maintain or advance their positions in the field over time.

### **11.3 Methodological reflections**

The mixed-methods research design posed many challenges for me as a researcher with limited resources and time. But the quantitative and the qualitative data gathered through these methods were all indispensable for

this study. Triangulation of the data that was generated from the range of methods, vividly demonstrated the fluidity and multiplicities of cultural identities in different settings. The long-term participant observation in the field was valuable for this research in terms of establishing good relationships with people involved in this study, intuitively understanding the life experiences of participants in different social surroundings; and methodologically facilitating constant reflections on the research design and process.

In order to understand how British Chinese young people use media in terms of access, frequencies and preferences, this study deployed a questionnaire survey combined with in-depth interviews. The quantitative data generated from the questionnaire survey made it possible to compare the media use patterns of British Chinese participants with those of average British young people of a similar age. The comparison contributed to the findings that age and gender rather than ethno-cultural background acted as determining factors for media use by teenagers. The in-depth interviews, on the other hand, provided detailed social viewing contexts and recorded experiences elaborated upon by these media users. For example, the preference for East Asian media products among British Chinese participants was not detected in the questionnaire survey, but emerged from interviews later on. Both sets of data enabled the analysis of their media preferences to be situated within the context of a shared global youth culture.

On the question of how British Chinese young people perceive 'China and the Chinese', the quantitative data presented a general pattern. The qualitative verbal and visual data collected in later stages, sometimes reinforced and sometimes challenged these descriptions. The disjuncture between different sets of data provided opportunities for me to observe closely how participants navigated their positioning through changing narratives and discourses in different contexts.

Throughout the research I was aware that my identities and personal background may have shaped the ways in which I analysed the data; and my perceived positioning by participants may have influenced their accounts and

behaviours during our interactions. These factors, which may potentially affect the validity and reliability of the results, were taken into consideration in the analysis of each case. These context-sensitive narratives by the participants provided rich resources for investigating cultural identities as examples of situated positioning achieved through interaction.

The most challenging method used in this study was the participatory photography workshop. The visual materials generated within the participatory photography workshop carried rich and abundant symbolic details that expressed the feelings and perceptions of their authors. However, the analysis goes beyond the isolated symbols of the end product. Participants' interpretations of their own photos were contested depending on the contexts, the purpose of the visual production and their social positioning within the audience at the time. Rather, the findings were drawn from the reflective examination of the whole process of visual production together with the authors' own accounts and interpretations. This visual participant method was an effective and integral part of this research design, without which the data collected would have been limited. A number of interesting critical issues arose from undertaking such a methodology. Firstly, the successful return of the data was highly dependent on the planning and supervision of the researcher. Secondly, the researcher's guidance inevitably influenced the production and interpretations of the visual data. Thirdly, the quality of the visual data also depended on the willingness and capability of candidates in visual production and interpretation. And fourthly, the visual data generated did not always 'empower' participants to disclose deeper or 'truer' opinions. However, the approach provides opportunities for researchers to examine participants' changing narratives and behaviours during the process of participating in the production of visual expressive forms.

#### **11.4 Contributions and research implications**

This thesis has made a range of theoretical contributions to the understanding of the lives and cultural identities of British Chinese people and further contributes to the fields of identity studies, cultural studies, education, migration studies and media studies, as outlined in the following comments.

- This study reveals the role of perceptions, representations and interpretations of ethnic/cultural origins in the formation of cultural identities among diasporic youth, highlighting the fact that their understanding of their migratory past was fractured and recreated through their current experiences.
- This study presents a range of strategies of positioning adopted by British Chinese young people as individuals and as an ethnic group in the social fields of media and education. With analyses of influential discourses and power relations within each field, it also investigates the ways in which these young people define and contest the meanings of 'Chineseness' and 'Britishness' that provide multiple symbolic resources for building their cultural identities.
- This study identifies the discourses within mainstream society and the Chinese community that may marginalize British Chinese young people and shows the pain that these essentialized images may cause for these young people.
- This study examines the media use of British Chinese young people in relation to their cultural identities, which contributes to the limited literature in this area and benefits the interdisciplinary discussion of culture, migration and media studies.
- This study examines the negotiation of the cultural identities of British Chinese young people through their learning of heritage languages and culture in Chinese complementary schools, highlighting their need to establish connections between their cultural heritage and their current living experiences in a multicultural society.

The process of the research and the findings of this study also provide a range of empirical implications for researchers, educators, academic institutions and professional organisations.

As suggested by Archer and Francis (2005a), researchers, educational practitioners and policy makers need to interrogate the re/production of racial

inequalities in the educational system. As the findings show in Chapter 8, even the seemingly positive stereotypes about British Chinese pupils can have negative consequences for both high-achieving and less well achieving British Chinese pupils. As British Chinese pupils and parents alike tend to internalize and reproduce these stereotypes, teachers and schools need to be more wary of the hidden psychological problems of British Chinese pupils and provide support to those who are marginalized by cultural stereotypes.

The findings in Chapter 9 revealed an urgent need to develop appropriate teaching materials and pedagogical guidance for teaching Chinese as a community heritage language. Chinese school associations, Chinese schools, teachers and researchers in the field of CHL education need to recognize the potential limitations of current textbooks, curriculum and pedagogy used in Chinese schools. The professional development of CHL teachers needs to reflect the challenges in intercultural classrooms caused by the diverse linguistic and cultural demands of pupils. Networking opportunities among CHL teachers as well as with modern foreign languages teachers would be beneficial for exchanging expertise and enhancing mutual learning opportunities. Teachers and pupils need to be encouraged to reflect on their own cultural discourses in order to avoid stereotyping and exclusion. The findings may be helpful for both Chinese and other community language schools in Britain.

This research also draws attention to issues in relation to racial marginalization and the psychological strain required to deliver an outstanding level of academic achievement yet low civic participation among British Chinese young people. Collaborative work among different organizations in British mainstream society and the Chinese community may help professionals to better explore the current concerns and issues in the lives and identities of British Chinese young people. Sharing the collaborative findings in the form of workshops and seminars in Chinese schools, youth groups or other advisory agencies may inform and provide suggestions for Chinese parents and children in helping them to deal with the pressures and problems of fitting into mainstream society.

### **11.5 Limitations and Future research**

This research has largely focused on British Chinese young people within a specific age group who attended Chinese schools and resided in Greater London. The majority of the young participants were the children of migrants from the PRC. There may be differences of experiences and identities of British Chinese in different age group, in suburban areas, outside of Chinese schools, in families originating from Xinjiang, Taiwan or southeast Asia, or in families characterized by multiple cultural heritages. Nevertheless, with such a specific group of participants, this study showed that there is no longer a single category, or one set of commonly shared characteristics of being 'Chinese', 'British' or 'British Chinese'. The boundaries are porous and fluid, even within family units. Within the British Chinese community one will encounter shades of association and identification mixing and blending elements of the British, the Chinese, the regional and indeed the global. The complexities revealed in this research have highlighted the need for studies in diaspora and cultural identities to recognize and reflect the heterogeneity that exists within a diasporic group.

New research could extend to address issues of identities within other British Chinese age groups, in other cities, or in suburban areas and outside of Chinese schools. Alternatively, a future study could be narrowed down to focus on a specific group of British Chinese such as children in mixed marriages, newly migrated children, or Chinese children adopted by British families. Future longitudinal research could revisit the issues of cultural identities with the participants in this study after they entered higher education or the labour market. Future comparative studies would also be valuable to examine the cultural identities of Chinese diasporic young people in other countries.

In the The participatory photography workshop I undertook with participants, some data were not as satisfactory as others because I had not provide enough supervision and support for a few participants. But the triangulation of verbal and visual data were invaluable for the research. This process revealed that discussing abstract concepts with young people by engaging them to talk

about and represent their real life experiences can be very illuminating (Chapter 6). Further research could explore the role of various transnational activities in the construction of cultural identities, particularly the activities facilitated by new technology.

This study has situated diasporic youth in the media sphere and provided a general picture of the consumption of media among this particular group of British Chinese young people (Chapter 7). Given the recent fast development in information technology and media, the data collected in 2010 may not be representative for the current patterns of media consumptions among British Chinese young people. A direction for future studies is to explore the practice, risks, and safety issues of the online use of young people in migrant families. This study has not found a distinct pattern of preferences in media consumption among young British Chinese participants or a visible British Chinese identity in British youth culture. It would also be valuable to explore further the possibility of an emerging British Chinese identity in the sphere of media and youth culture among school-aged British Chinese.

The findings in Chapter 8 disclosed the impact of cultural stereotypes on the lives of British Chinese young people. Future studies could explore the impact of the stereotypical cultural discourses in other contexts such as the labour market, marriages and intergenerational relationships in British Chinese families. The findings were based on the accounts of British Chinese young people. Future studies could consolidate or interrogate the current findings by employing other methods such as participant observations and interviews with teachers in mainstream school. The lack of political integration of British Chinese families highlighted in this study also demonstrates the need for future research to understand this issue and provide corresponding solutions to enhance the civic awareness and participation of these young people in British politics and society.

The current lack of academic and governmental attention to pedagogical research in Chinese schools shows a failure to keep pace with the increasing popularity of learning Chinese and attending Chinese schools within the

Chinese community and wider British society. Given the problems and challenges highlighted in this study, more studies are needed to explore a wider range of research topics in the emerging field of CHL education.

Furthermore, this thesis has drawn upon insights from theories and concepts in various disciplines such as cultural studies, sociology, media studies and educational research. An interdisciplinary approach is important to investigate cultural identity as a dynamic, discursively produced, intersectional and context-dependent condition or state of being.

In the increasingly interconnected global era, there is even more need and scope for studying issues related to cultural hybridity and identities in multi-ethnic Britain. As noted by Yeh (2014), newer forms of pan-Asian identities are emerging in the UK. The dynamics of the formation, representation and performance of cultural identities displayed in this study could be useful in the exploration of the multiple ways of being British as well as Chinese or Asian, among others identifications.



## Appendix 1 Tables

**Table 10: Population of Chinese in Britain, 1851-2011**

Year	Number	Sources
1851	78	1851 census
1861	147	1861 census
1871	202	1871 census
1881	665	1881 census
1891	582	1891 census
1901	387	1901 census
1911	3,182	1911 census
1921	4,382	1921 census
1931	5,973	1931 census
1951	12,095	1951 census
1960s	60,000	Jones, 1979
1971	96,035	1971 census
1981	92,000	OPCS <sup>36</sup> , 1981
1984-1986 average	115,000	Jones, 1993 <sup>37</sup>
1987	126,000	Jones, 1993
1988-1990 average	135,000	Jones, 1993
1991	152,900	1991 census <sup>38</sup>
2001	247,403	2001 census
2011	433,150	2011 census

Source: Data before 1991 were cited from Luk (2008, p. 47). Data from 1991 onwards are cited from census reports in 1991, 2001 and 2011.

**Table 11: Grants of settlement from 1997 to 2008**

Year	Number of Persons	
	China	Hong Kong
1997	1,230	900
1998	1,550	810
1999	1,520	490
2000	1,710	800
2001	1,515	605
2002	1,705	460
2003	2,540	725
2004	2,515	540
2005	4,215	805
2006	3,320	1,060
2007	3,440	785
2008	6,890	1,040

Source: Annual Abstract of Statistics, Office for National Statistics (various years). Data retrieved from <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/all-releases.html?definition=tcm%3A77-26494>

**Table 12: Ethnic Chinese by Age in England and Wales 2001 and 2011.**

Age	2001		2011	
	Population	Percentage	Population	Percentage
Age 0 to 4	10,712	4.72	18,650	4.74
5 to 7	6,832	3.01	8,120	2.07
8 to 9	4,882	2.15	4,806	1.22
10 to 14	15,293	6.74	14,775	3.76
15	3,870	1.71	4,164	1.06
16 to 17	9,264	4.08	11,127	2.83
18 to 19	11,983	5.28	17,997	4.58
20 to 24	30,380	13.39	80,970	20.60
25 to 29	22,076	9.73	48,142	12.25
30 to 34	19,027	8.38	38,572	9.81
35 to 39	19,573	8.62	30,209	7.68
40 to 44	19,123	8.43	24,579	6.25
45 to 49	16,945	7.47	22,784	5.80
50 to 54	12,680	5.59	20,014	5.09
55 to 59	6,511	2.87	16,470	4.19
60 to 64	6,162	2.72	11,927	3.03
65 to 69	4,837	2.13	6,393	1.63
70 to 74	3,156	1.39	5,688	1.45
75 to 79	1,806	0.80	4,040	1.03
80 to 84	1,074	0.47	2,229	0.57
85 and over	762	0.34	1,485	0.38
Total	226,948	100	393,141	100

Source: Data of Population in 2001 and 2011 are extracted from 2001 and 2011 UK census. Percentages are calculated by the author.

**Table 13: Distribution of Chinese population in Britain, 1991, 2001 and 2011**

		<b>1991</b>	<b>2001</b>		<b>2011</b>	
		Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>England</b>		<b>90.27</b>	<b>220,681</b>	<b>87.73</b>	<b>385,365</b>	<b>87.69</b>
	London	36.05	80,201	31.88	126,349	28.75
	North West	11.06	26,887	10.69	48,817	11.11
	North East	3.17	6,048	2.40	14,415	3.28
	Yorkshire and the Humber	5.21	12,340	4.91	28,846	6.56
	East Midlands	4.84	12,910	5.13	24,718	5.62
	West Midlands	6.11	16,099	6.40	31,722	7.22
	East	2.38	20,385	8.10	34,097	7.76
	South East	17.2	33,089	13.15	53,865	12.26
	South West	4.26	12,722	5.06	22,536	5.13
<b>Wales</b>		<b>3.06</b>	<b>6,267</b>	<b>2.49</b>	<b>13,793</b>	<b>3.14</b>
<b>Scotland</b>		<b>6.68</b>	<b>16,000</b>	<b>6.36</b>	<b>34,000</b>	<b>7.74</b>
<b>Northern Ireland</b>		–	<b>4,145</b>	<b>1.65</b>	<b>6,303</b>	<b>1.43</b>
<b>Total</b>		–	251,548	100.00	439,453	100.00

Source: Data in 1991 cited from (Luk, 2008, p. 130); Numbers of Chinese in England and Wales in 2001 and 2011 are from 2001 and 2011 UK census reports (England and Wales); Numbers of Chinese in Scotland are from 2001 and 2011 National Records of Scotland. Numbers of Chinese in Northern Ireland are from 2001 and 2011 Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

Percentages of Chinese population in 2001 and 2011 are calculated by the author

**Table 14: Demographics of participants from in-depth interviews<sup>39</sup>**

Name	Gender	Age	Birthplace	Years in Britain	Home	School	Father's / Mother's birthplace	Father's occupation	Mother's occupation	Siblings	Attend Chinese school	Years in Chinese school	Chinese Language ability	Place of Interview
Ming Su	M	14	London	14	NW London	Private	China/China	Senior researcher	University Lecturer	1	Yes	7	Fluent in M	Chinese school
Ann Jip	F	14	London	14	SE London	Non-selective State	China/China	Construction company owner	Homemaker	2	Used to	4	Fluent in C, understands M	Home
Rachel Chou	F	16	Kent	16	Kent	Selective State	HK China/China	Secondary School teacher	Homemaker	1	Yes	8	Fluent in C and M	Chinese school
Simon Chou	M	14	Kent	14	Kent	Selective State	HK China/China	Secondary School teacher	Homemaker	1	Yes	6	Fluent in C and M	Chinese school
David Jip	M	18	London	18	SE London	Non-selective State	China/China	Construction company owner	Homemaker	2	Used to	7	Fluent in C, understands M	Home
Emily Tong	F	15	Essex	15	Essex	Non-selective State	Vietnam/China	Office worker	Nurse	1	Yes	3	Fluent in C, knows a little M	Home
Kuan Tang	M	17	London	17	East London	Selective State	China/China	N/A	Course developer in a community college	0	Yes	11	Fluent in M, does not understand C	Chinese school
Gabby Chan	F	15	London	15	Kent	Non-selective State	China/China	Market seller	Market seller	1	Used to	10	Fluent in C, does not understand M	Home
Julia Chan	F	17	London	17	Kent	Selective State	China/China	Market seller	Market seller	1	Used to	12	Fluent in C, understands M	Home
Josie Lau	F	15	London	15	Surrey	Private	China/Malaysia	Restaurant owner	Homemaker	2	Used to	5	Fluent in C, does not understand M	Home
Jake Lau	M	16	London	16	Surrey	Private	China/Malaysia	Restaurant owner	Homemaker	2	Used to	5	Fluent in C, does not understand M	Home

Name	Gender	Age	Birthplace	Years in Britain	Home	School	Father's/ Mother's birthplace	Father's occupation	Mother's occupation	Siblings	Attend Chinese school	Years in Chinese school	Chinese language ability	Place of Interview
Johanna Deng	F	14	London	14	NE London	Non-selective State	China/China	Secondary school teacher	Administrator	1	Yes	7	Fluent in M, does not understand C	Chinese school
Wendy Wei	F	15	Hong Kong China	15	NE London	Selective State	HK China/China	Doesn't know	Accountant	0	Yes	7	Fluent in M, understands C	Chinese school
Yunke Xia	F	14	China	10	NW London	Private	China/China	Senior lecturer in university	Nurse	1	Yes	9	Fluent in M, does not understand C	Chinese school
Kenny Fong	M	18	London	18	SE London	Non-selective State	China/China	Chef in Chinese restaurant	Homemaker	0	Used to	9	Fluent in C, does not understand M	Home
Zhengyi Li	M	15	China	9	North London	Selective State	China/China	Neurology research scientist	Neurology research scientist	0	Yes	3	Fluent in M, does not understand C	Chinese school
Namjyu Pun	M	15	London	15	NW London	Non-selective State	China/Malaysia	Factory owner	Homemaker	2	Yes	10	Fluent in C, knows a little M	Chinese school
Peter Lam	M	17	HK China	10	SE London	Non-selective State	China/China	Restaurant owner	Homemaker	1	Used to	6	Fluent in C, does not understand M	Home
Qing Wen	F	13	China	8	East London	Non-selective State	China/China	Unemployed	Clothes factory tailor	1	Yes	2	Fluent in M, does not understand C	Chinese school
Tianyi Shen	F	13	China	9	West London	Selective State	China/China	Production manager in a publishing company	Researcher in university	1	Yes	5	Fluent in M, does not understand C	Chinese school
Chulin Wang	F	13	London	10	Kent	Selective State	China/China	Engineer	Accountant	1	Yes	4	Fluent in M, does not understand C	Chinese school

Name	Gender	Age	Birthplace	Years in Britain	Home	School	Father's/ Mother's birthplace	Father's occupation	Mother's occupation	Siblings	Attend Chinese school	Years in Chinese school	Chinese language ability	Place of interview
Min Xu	F	15	China	6	East London	Non-selective State	China/China	Plumber	Homemaker	1	Yes	4	Fluent in M, does not understand C	Chinese school
Ying Yu	F	18	China	7	Central London	Non-selective State	China/China	Manager in a recycling company	Chinese Medicine Doctor	0	Yes	1	Fluent in M, does not understand C	Chinese school
Ke Zeng	F	14	China	14	Central London	Non-selective State	China/China	Tour guide	Nursery teacher	5	Yes	8	Fluent in M, does not understand C	Chinese school
Gang Zhang	M	16	China	11	East London	Selective State	China/China	Manager in an oil company	Accountant in oil company	0	Yes	2	Fluent in M, does not understand C	Chinese school
Sarah Frost	F	13	China	12	East London	Non-selective State	China/China (Adoptive father and mother are white British)	Adoptive father is a playwright	Adoptive mother is a secondary school teacher	1	Used to	5	Knows a little M, does not understand C	Home
Nicole Frost	F	15	China	12	East London	Non-selective State	China/China (Adoptive father and mother are white British)	Adoptive father is a playwright	Adoptive mother is a secondary school teacher	1	Used to	5	Knows a little M, does not understand C	Home
Alice Manning	F	14	China	14	East London	Non-selective State	China/China (Adoptive father and mother are white British)	Adoptive father is a manager in a publishing company	Adoptive mother works as a literacy scout	0	Used to	5	Knows a little M, does not understand C	Home
Joseph Kenny	M	18	China	10	South London	Non-selective State	China/China (Stepfather is white British)	Stepfather is a taxi driver	Homemaker	0	Used to	0.5	Fluent in M, does not understand C	Home

**Table 15: Number of visits to China (including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan)**

Number of visits	N	%
0	15	14.9
1-5	42	41.6
6-10	27	26.7
11 above	17	16.8
Total	101	100

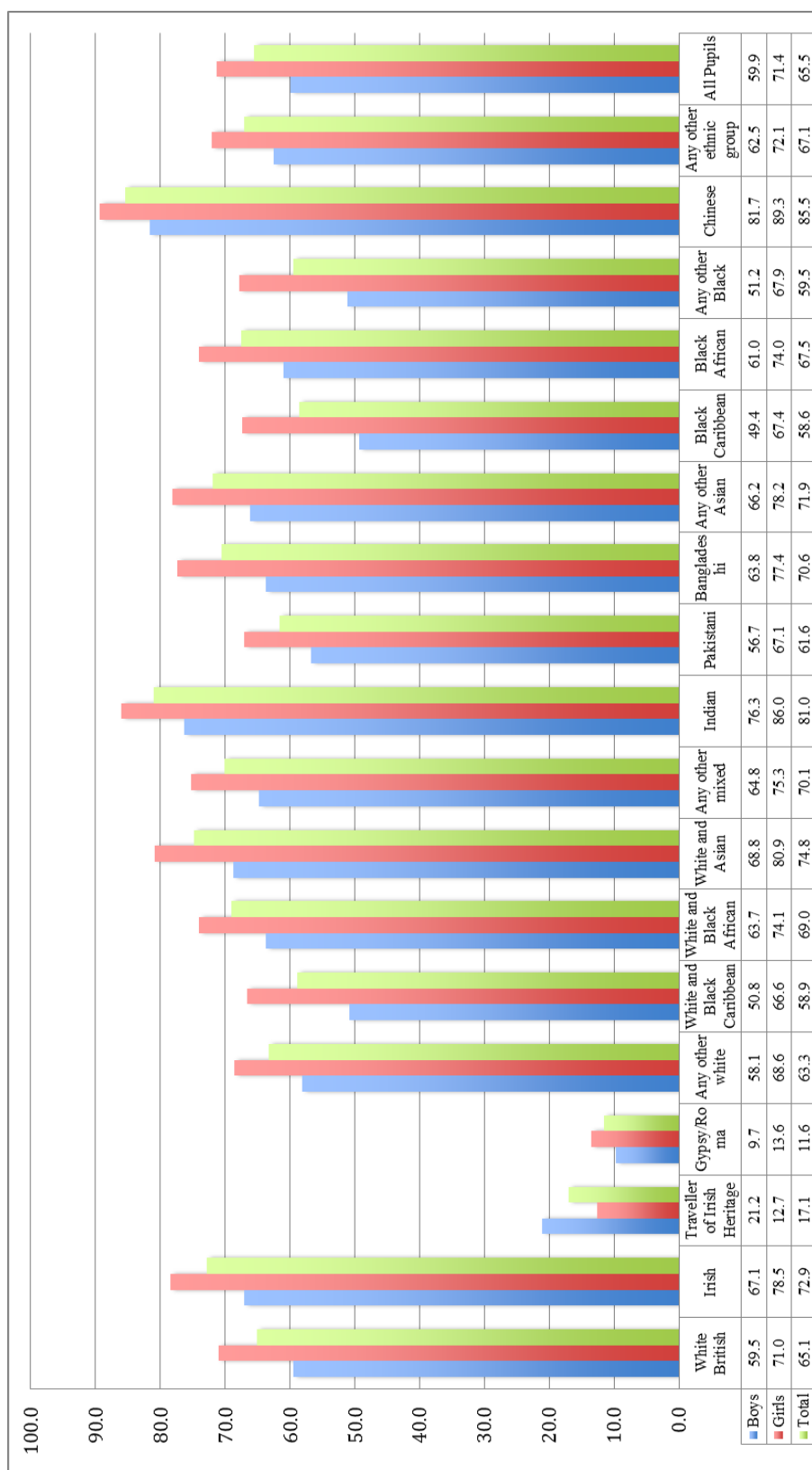
**Table 16: British Chinese young people's opinions about descriptions of China**

		Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Total (%)
Environmental descriptions	Crowded	62.0	32.0	6.0	0	0	100
	Noisy	46.0	35.0	18.0	1.0	0	100
	Polluted	45.0	33.0	15.0	6.0	1.0	100
	Beautiful landscape	22.0	44.0	28.0	5.0	1.0	100
	Dirty	19.2	37.4	32.3	9.1	2.0	100
Economic descriptions	Fast development	47.0	41.0	12.0	0	0	100
	Cheap labour	31.0	29.0	34.0	3.0	3.0	100
Socio-cultural descriptions	Delicious food	66.0	21.0	11.0	1.0	1.0	100
	Interesting history	41.0	32.0	22.0	5.0	0	100
	Exciting	25.0	46.0	26.0	3.0	0	100
	Too many rules	11.0	20.0	51.0	18.0	0	100
Political descriptions	Corrupt Government	15.0	19.0	52.0	11.0	3.0	100

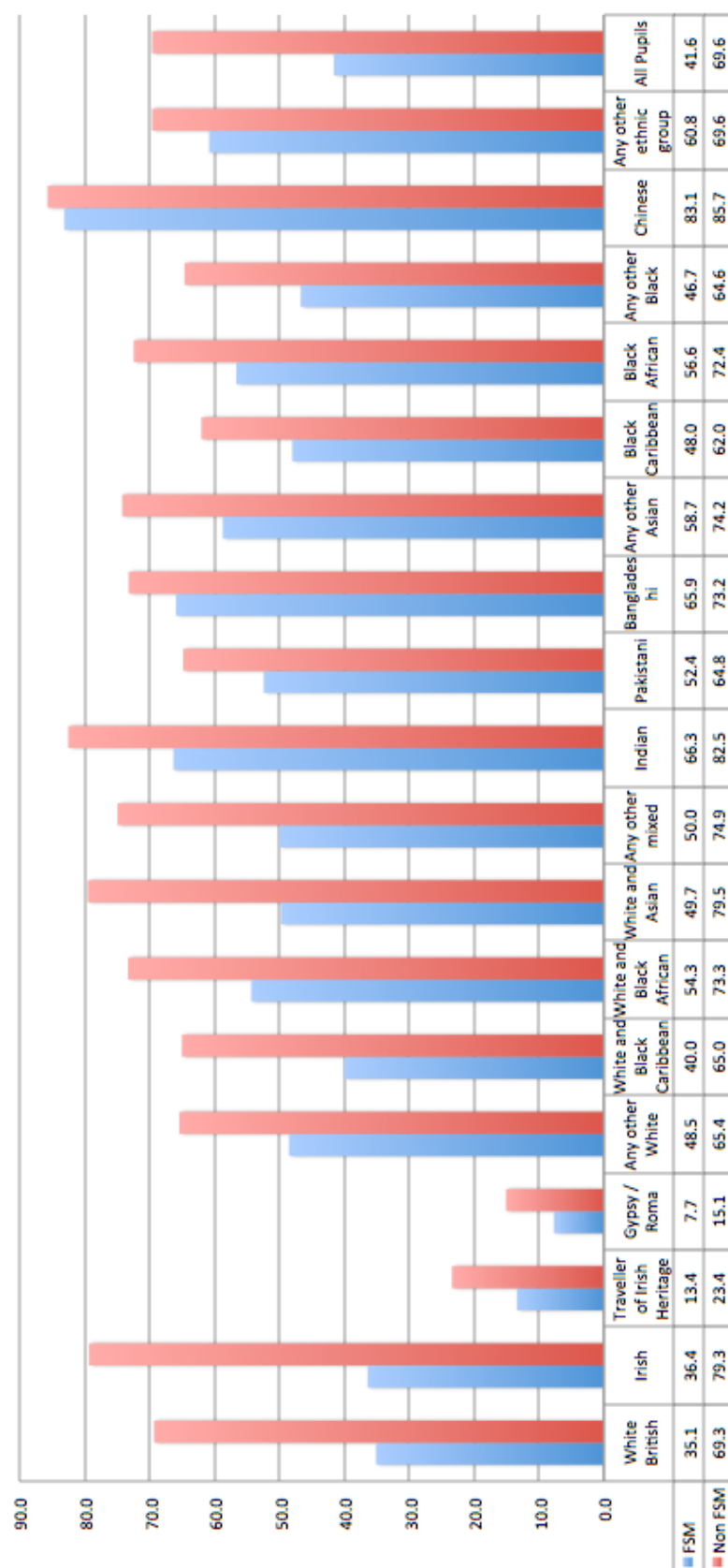


## Appendix 2: Figures

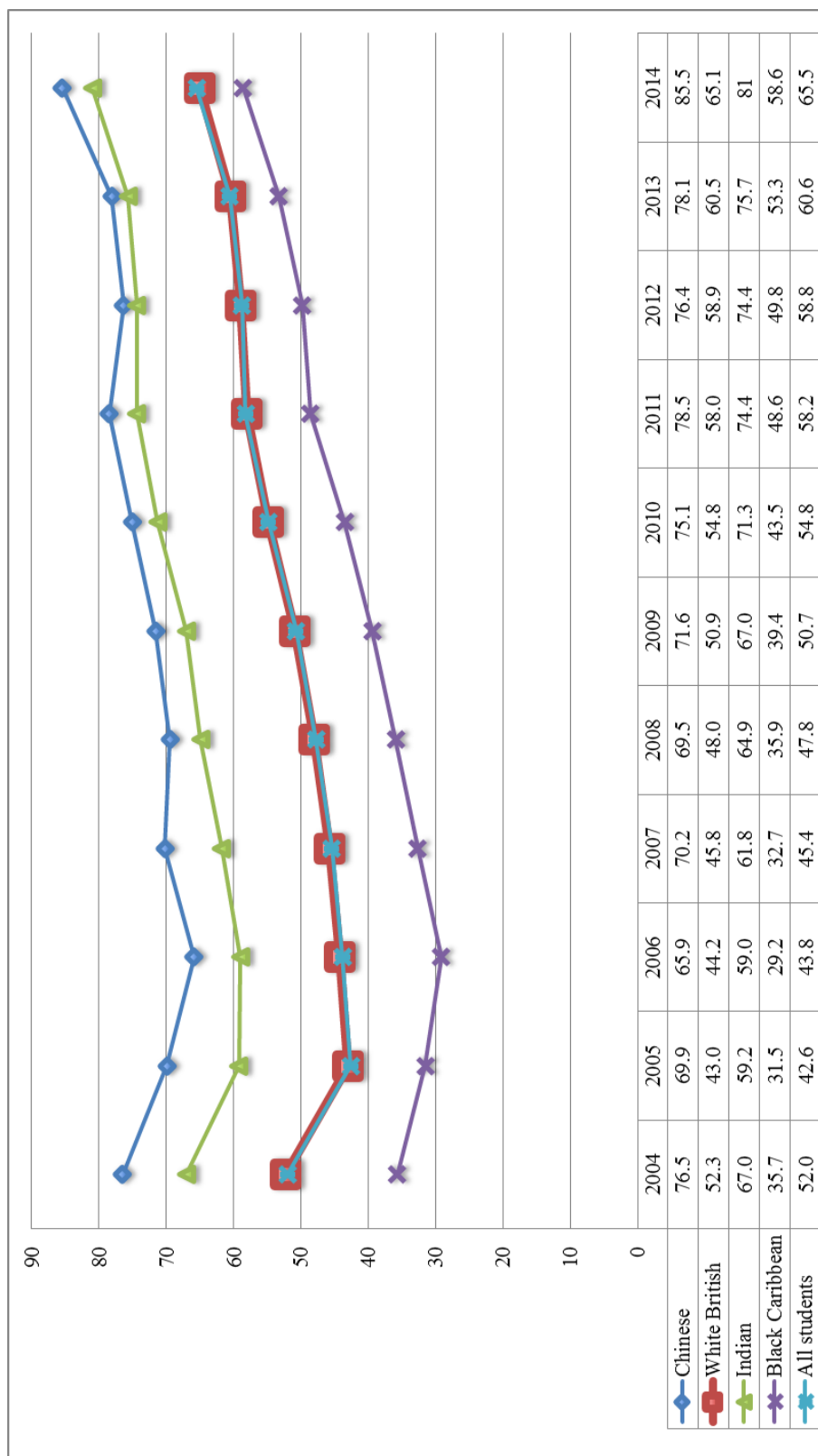
**Figure 32: Pupils Achievements at GCSE and equivalent (measured by Percentage achieving 5+ A\*-C grades inc. English & Mathematics) in 2013/2014, by ethnicity and gender. Source: DfE.**



**Figure 33: Pupil's attainment at GCSE and equivalent (measured by Percentage achieving 5+ A\*-C grades inc. English & Mathematics) in 2013/2014, by ethnicity and FSM/Non-FSM. Source: DfE.**



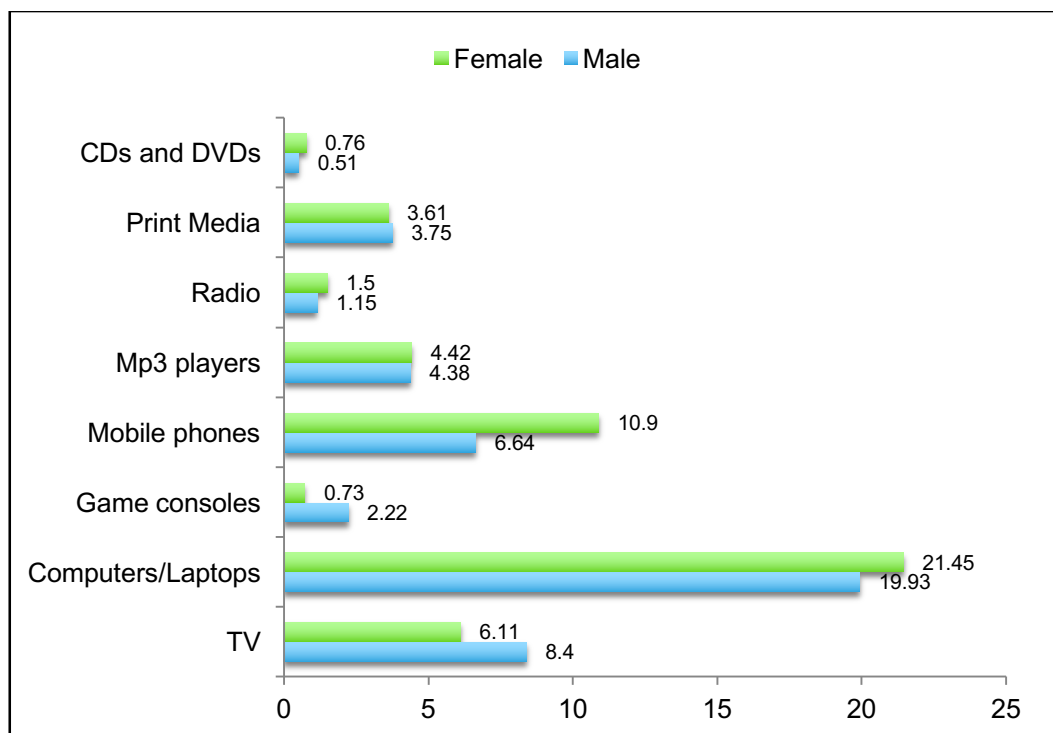
**Figure 34: Pupils' Attainment at GCSE and equivalent (measured by Percentage achieving 5+ A\*-C grades inc. English & Mathematics) from 2004 to 2014, by selected ethnicities. Source: DfE.**



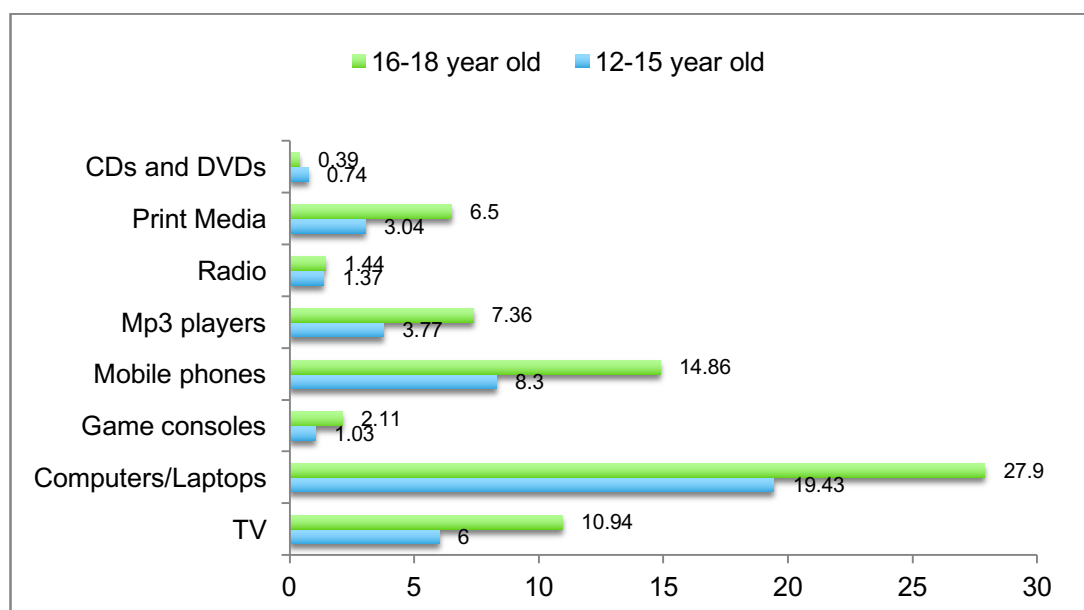
**Figure 35: The Japanese anime character Chunli in the Japanese fighting video game 'Street Fighter' in the 1980s**



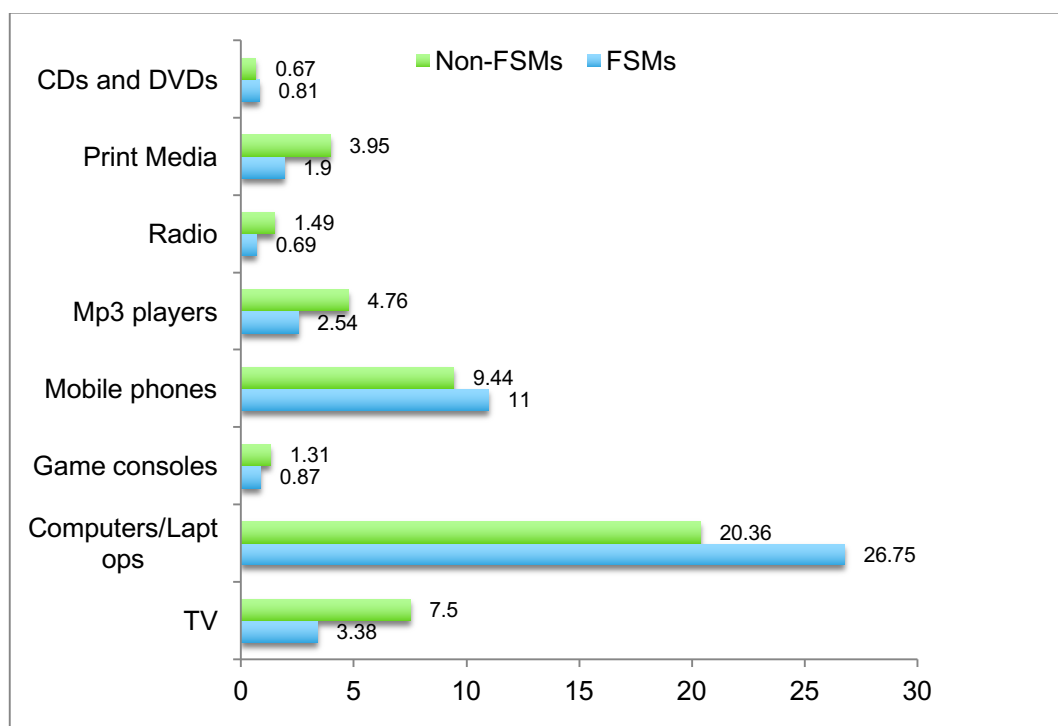
**Figure 36 The average time (HPW) British Chinese young people spent on media by gender in 2011.**



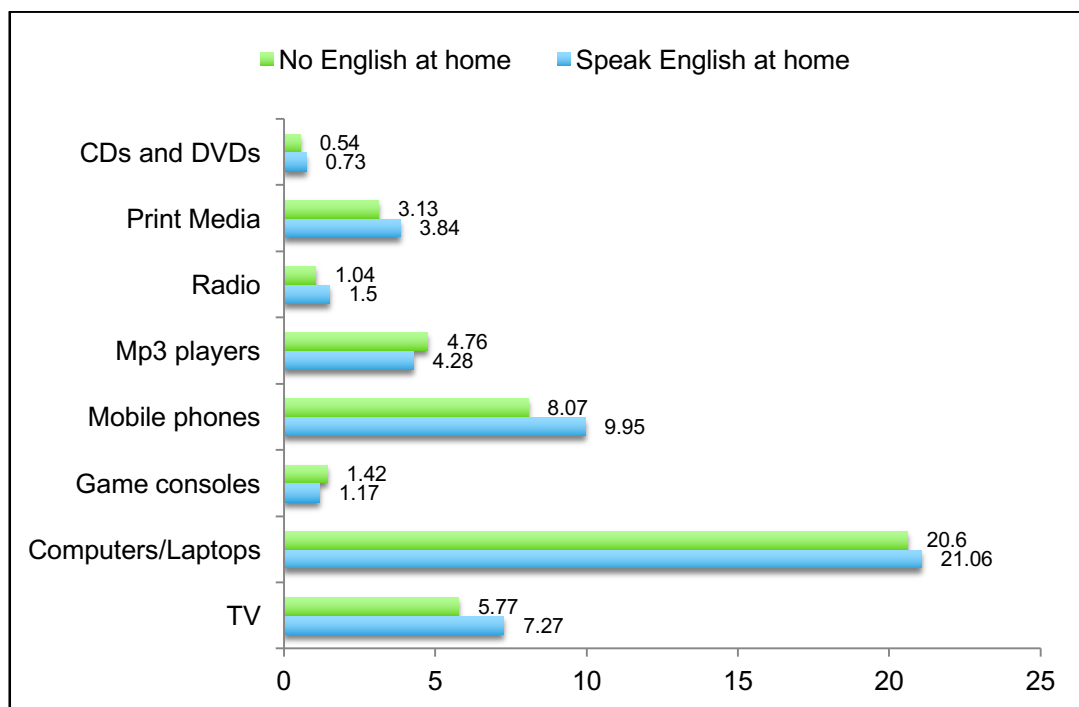
**Figure 37: The average time (HPW) British Chinese young people spent on media by age group in 2011.**



**Figure 38: The average time (HPW) British Chinese young people spent on media by FSMs and Non-FSMs in 2011.**



**Figure 39: The average time (HPW) British Chinese young people spent on media by whether or not speaking English at home in 2011**



## Appendix 3 Questionnaire Survey

### Introduction

My name is Danlu Wang. I am a PhD student funded by the Centenary Scholarship at the Institute of Education, University of London. This questionnaire forms part of my doctoral research into the cultural identities of British Chinese young people. The following questionnaire takes only 15 minutes to complete, but it will provide me with valuable information. Your answers are strictly confidential and anonymous. Please answer the questions according to your real experiences. Thank you very much for your participation.

### About You

1. What is your gender?  
A. Male B. Female
  2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. What type of school do you attend? (Please circle/tick all suitable descriptions).  
A. Independent Day School B. Independent Boarding School C. State School  
D. Single sex school E. Mixed sex school  
F. Selective School G. Comprehensive School H. Religious School  
I. Sixth Form College J. FE College  
K. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  4. During the week, do you get free school meals?  
A. Yes B. No
  5. In which city/county do you live in the UK? \_\_\_\_\_
  6. In which city were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
  7. How long have you been living in the UK? \_\_\_\_\_
  8. What is your nationality (which country's passports are you holding)? \_\_\_\_\_
  9. How many years have you studied in Chinese language schools in the UK? \_\_\_\_\_
  10. What language do you speak at home? (Please circle all that apply).  
A. English B. Mandarin C. Cantonese D. other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  11. Do you have any siblings? A. Yes B. No  
If yes, how many sisters and brothers do you have? \_\_\_\_\_ sisters, \_\_\_\_\_ brothers.
  12. Please state the ethnic origin of your:  
Birth Father \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Mother \_\_\_\_\_  
OR  
Guardian 1 (if she/he is not your birth parent) \_\_\_\_\_  
Guardian 2 (if she/he is not your birth parent) \_\_\_\_\_
  13. Do you have relatives living in the UK?  
A. Yes B. No
-

## Your Media Use

1. Do you use any of the following devices in your own room at home? (Please tick 'yes' if you own the device and 'no' if it belongs to your parents/family):

Do you have your own:	Yes	No
TV		
Computer/laptop		
Mobile phone		
Games Console/Video game players		
Mp3 player/iPod		

2. Looking at the list below, approximately how many hours did you spend on each of the following per week during last month?

Media	Time (hours)	Media	Time (hours)
TV		Computer   Internet	
Games Consoles		Mobile phones	
Magazines/newspapers		Cinemas	
Books (apart from study/school books)		Mp3 players	
Radio		CDs/DVDs	

3. Looking at the list below, which five types of TV programmes were your favourite to watch last month? Please rank your top five with number 1 being your most favourite.

News		Movies	
Religious		Sport	
Audience participation game shows		Soap operas	
Weather		Talk shows	
Music		Reality shows	
Award ceremonies		Science fiction	
Animation/Anime		Nature & wildlife	
Science & Technology		Fashion & beauty	
History		Drama	
TV Shopping		Comedy	
Other (please specify)			



4. Looking at the list below, which ten online activities did you carry out most frequently last month?  
Please rank them from numbers 1 to 10, number 1 being your most frequent activity.

Visiting others' blogs and profiles using online social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, YouTube etc.		Creating blogs, uploading text, photos or videos to share with other users on online social networking sites.	
Watching TV programmes/movies, or listen to radio programmes online.		Watching videos or listening to audio clips on a video/audio sharing website (e.g. YouTube).	
Using search engines (e.g. google and Wikipedia) to gather information.		Playing online games.	
Visiting forums or participating in online discussions.		Downloading computer programmes, pictures video or audio files.	
Visiting websites according to your hobbies and interests.		Creating an online representation of you (e.g. online avatar, second life).	
Research for study/homework.		Sending or reading emails.	
Online shopping.		Selling things online.	
Reading news online.		Surfing online just for fun.	
Instant text messaging.		Online live voice chatting.	
Other (please specify).			

5. How do you access Chinese TV programmes/movies at home? (Please tick all suitable answers from the table below).

Chinese satellite TV channels		Online video streaming websites	
Download from the internet		Rent/buy DVDs	
I don't watch Chinese TV/ movies at all		Other (please specify)	

6. During the last month, for approximately how many hours per week did you watch Chinese TV programmes/movies? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Please list five of your favourite Chinese and non-Chinese TV programmes/movies in the table below:

Chinese TV programmes/movies	Non-Chinese TV programmes/movies
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

8. Looking at the table below, please tick the online activities in which you participated that relate to China during last month. (Please tick all suitable answers).

Contacted friends in China		Contacted family in China	
Searched for information about China		Read news about China	
Watched Chinese movies/TV programmes/video clips online		Downloaded Chinese movies/TV programmes	
Uploaded text, pictures or videos to express opinions about China		Participated in the online Chinese community	
Studied Chinese		Played online games with friends in China	
Other (please specify)			

### About China

- Since settling in the UK, how many times have you been to China (including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan)? \_\_\_\_\_
- During your last visit to China, how did you spend most of your time?
  - Sightseeing
  - Staying with family
  - Learning Chinese
  - Hanging out with friends
  - Shopping
 Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Below is a list of descriptions of China. Please specify how much you agree or disagree with each.

Description	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Fast development					
Crowded					
Exciting					
Noisy					
Beautiful landscape					
Dirty					
Delicious food					
Polluted					
Interesting history					
Corrupt government					
Too many rules					
Cheap labour					

Please provide any other descriptions you think are applicable to China:

4. Do you perceive yourself as:
- Chinese
  - British
  - British Chinese
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for your participation.

## Appendix 4 Interview schedule for focus group discussion

### Perceptions of China/Chinese and Britain/British

1. Write a few words or draw pictures to describe 'China/Chinese' and 'Britain/British'.
2. Explain these words and drawings.

### British media representations of China and Chinese

Activities: Using two videos to prompt discussion

1. Clips of BBC documentary 'The Chinese Are Coming'<sup>40</sup> broadcast in 2011 investigated the spread of Chinese influence around the world. It represented China as the world's economic superpower and how it spread its footsteps to Africa, Brazil, America and Europe. It also gave out warnings (just by reading the title) of how quickly these profit-orientated, hard-working and unscrupulous Chinese businessmen and workers can out-compete local workers and take over the world.
2. Interview with Amy Chua, the author of *Battle hymn of the tiger mother* (Chua, 2011)<sup>41</sup>, broadcast on the 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 2011.

Questions discussed include:

1. What do you think of these two videos?
2. How do you think China and Chinese are perceived in the British media? How about the other way round?
3. When conflicts of opinions occur in the British and Chinese media, how do you react?
4. How would you define yourself: British, Chinese, British Chinese or other? Why? If the answer is 'British Chinese', then ask how much do you think you are British, how much do you think you are Chinese? What aspects of your life are British and what aspects Chinese?
5. If you were in China and people asked you where you were from, how would you answer? When you are in the UK and people ask you where you are from, how do you answer? Why?
6. Do you think it is important to learn Chinese? Why? Do your parents think it is important to learn Chinese? Why?
7. What is your biggest concern at present?
8. What is your dream career? Do you think this has any connections with China?
9. Have you considered art or politics as possible career paths? Why?
10. Would your ideal partner be someone of Chinese ethnic origin? Why/why not?
11. What are your parents' opinions of your future plans?
12. How do you think future generations of your Chinese family in the UK will progress in British society?
13. Do you participate in any community activities? If yes, please elaborate.
14. If you were given a chance, would you represent British Chinese young people?
15. Do you think being ethnic Chinese has affected your experiences in school? If yes, how?
16. Do you agree that ethnic Chinese pupils are good at maths/diligent/quiet/well-behaved in class? Why?

## **Appendix 5 Interview schedules for British Chinese young people**

### **Life story**

1. How old are you?
2. Where were you born?

If participants were not born in Britain, ask questions 3-8:

3. When and why did you come to the UK?
4. Was it difficult for you to cope with your new life in Britain back then? If yes, what were the major difficulties? How did you overcome those difficulties?
5. What are the differences between living in China and living in Britain?
6. Do you think you have changed since you moved to Britain? If yes, in what way?
7. Do you miss life in China? If yes, what do you miss?
8. Do you think your parents' parenting style has changed since you settled in the UK? If yes, in what way?
9. What kind of school do you attend?
10. Where were your parents born?
11. How did they come to Britain?
12. Do you mind telling me your parents' occupations?

### **In mainstream schools**

13. What are your favourite subjects? Why?
14. What are your least favourite subjects? Why?
15. Do you see yourself as a good pupil?
16. What are the differences between studying in China and in the UK (if respondents have studied in China before)?
17. What is the coolest thing to do in your school?
18. How many Chinese pupils are there in your school?
19. Do you think being ethnic Chinese has affected your experiences in school? If yes, how?
20. Do you agree that ethnic Chinese pupils are good at maths/diligent/quiet/well-behaved in class? Why?
21. Have you ever encountered racial abuse or discrimination? In what way, if any, have you experienced this?
22. Do you participate in any after school clubs/groups/teams? If yes, what do you think of those activities? If no, why not?

### **In Chinese schools**

23. Do you attend a Chinese school? If yes, for how long have you been attending?
24. Why do you study in a Chinese school?
25. Do you like your Chinese school? Why?
26. What do you like about Chinese school? What do you dislike about Chinese school? Why?
27. What do you think of the teaching methods in your Chinese school?
28. Have you made any friends at your Chinese school? If yes, do you interact with them apart from during school time?
29. Do you think it is important to learn Chinese? Why?

30. Do your parents think it is important to learn Chinese? Why?
31. Do you participate in any after-school activities in your Chinese school? What do you think of these activities? Can you give some examples for your favourite and least favourite activities in your Chinese school?
32. Do you think your classmates in your Chinese school are different from your classmates in your mainstream school? If yes, in what way?
33. If you had children, would you send them to Chinese school? Would you ask them to learn Chinese?

#### **At home**

34. What are the expectations from your parents regarding your study?
35. What are the expectations from your parents regarding your future career?
36. Have you heard about 'Chinese tiger mother parenting'? (If not, the researcher will explain). What do you think of that?
37. What language(s) do you speak at home?
38. Have you been asked to help your parents? If yes, in what way?
39. Do you have any siblings? If yes, how do you get along with your siblings?

#### **Among friends**

40. What ethnicity/ethnicities are the majority of your friends? Has this always been the case?
41. How long have you known your present circle of friends?
42. What do you have in common with your friends?
43. How do you spend your time with your friends?
44. What do you normally talk about?
45. How do you interact with your friends? On Facebook, Twitter...?
46. Do you act differently when you are with your Chinese friends and your other friends?
47. Do you have any friends in China? If yes, how do you interact with each other?

#### **Chinese in Britain**

48. What Chinese associations, clubs, organisations or societies do you belong to?
49. How much influence do these institutions have in your life?
50. What is your understanding of the term the 'Chinese community'? How is the 'Chinese community' relevant to you?
51. Do you speak Chinese dialect(s)?
52. Can you read and write Chinese?
53. In what settings would you speak Chinese?
54. Do you view Britain/China as 'home'? Do you view Britain/China as your 'homeland'? Why?
55. How often do you visit your ancestral homeland? (i.e. Hong Kong, China, Vietnam, etc.) What do you do when you are there?
56. Do you think you have any attachment to your ancestral homeland?
57. Please use a few words to describe China and Chinese. Why do you use those words?
58. How would you define yourself: British, Chinese, British Chinese or

other? Why?

If the answer is 'British Chinese', then ask how much do you think you are British, how much do you think you are Chinese? What aspects of your life are British and what aspects Chinese?

59. If you were in China and people asked you where you came from, how would you answer? When you are in Britain and people ask you where you are from, how would you answer? Why?
60. Do you think your ethnic background will affect your life in Britain? If yes, in what way?
61. Do you participate in any community activities? If yes, please elaborate.
62. If you were given a chance, would you represent British Chinese young people?

### **Media Use**

63. What do you normally do online?
64. What TV programmes do you like to watch? Why?
65. Do you consume any Chinese media products, including print media, television, movies, video games, music and online media? If yes, what kind of Chinese media products do you like? Why?
66. When conflicts of opinion occur in the British and Chinese media, how do you react?
67. How do you think China and Chinese are perceived in the British media? How about the other way round?

### **Future**

68. What is your biggest concern now?
69. What is your dream career? Do you think this has any connections with China?
70. Have you considered art or politics as possible career paths? Why/why not?
71. Would your ideal partner be someone of Chinese ethnic origin? Why/why not?
72. What are your parents' opinions about your future plans?
73. How do you think future generations of your Chinese family will progress in Britain?

### **Leisure time**

74. What are your favourite leisure activities/hobbies?
75. How much time do you devote to these activities?

## Appendix 6 Interview schedule for parents

### 基本信息 Basic information

1. 请问你在哪里出生的？

Where were you born?

2. 当年你为什么来英国？

Why did you come to the UK?

3. 你在英国生活了多长时间？

How long have you been living in the UK?

4. 你为什么决定定居英国？

Why did you settle in the UK?

5. 你的工作是什么？

What is your job?

6. 你有几个孩子？他们分别有几岁了？

How many children do you have? How old are they?

7. 你刚来英国的时候适应这里的生活吗？为什么？

What did you think of life in Britain when you first came here? Why?

8. 你多长时间会一次国？

How often do you go back to China?

9. 你一般回国都做什么？

What do you normally do when you are in China?

10. 你的亲戚都在国内吗？

Are most of your relatives in China?

### 关于孩子 About their Children

11. 你觉得你的孩子学中文重要吗？为什么？

Do you think it is important for your children to learn Chinese? Why?

12. 你为什么把孩子送到中文学校学习？

Why do you send your children to a Chinese school?

13. 针对你孩子的学习和未来的职业，你对他们有什么期望？

What are your expectations for your children regarding study and their future career?

**14. 你对你的孩子最大的担忧是什么？**

What are your biggest worries about your children?

**15. 你认为你和英国的父母还有在中国的父母有区别吗？如果有，你认为你们在哪些方面不同？**

Do you think you are different from other British parents and Chinese parents in China? If yes, in what way?

**16. 你认为你的孩子和英国人的小孩还有在中国长大的孩子有不同吗？如果有，你认为他们在哪些方面不同？**

Do you think your children are different from local British children/ Chinese children in China? If yes, in what way?

**17. 你觉得你的孩子是以下那一类人：中国人，英国人，英籍华裔或是其他？**

Do you think your children are Chinese, British, British Chinese or other?

**18. 你觉得华裔小孩在英国有什么优势和劣势？**

What are the advantages and disadvantages of being ethnic Chinese children in Britain?

**19. 你觉得未来一代得华裔在英国得发展前景是怎样的？**

How do you think future generations of British Chinese will progress?

**20. 你怎么看待关于华裔的一些看法：比如华裔的虎妈教育，华裔小孩学习优秀，华裔小孩在学校很乖很安静，等等**

What do you think of the perceptions of the overseas Chinese, such as Chinese tiger mother parenting, the belief that Chinese pupils are good at studying, or that Chinese pupils are well behaved and quiet in school, and so on?

**关于媒体 About media**

**21. 你平时看（听）什么平面媒体 / 电视 / 电影 / 音乐 / 网站？**

What kind of media products do you consume, including print media, television, movies, music, and internet?

**22. 你在这里能看到国内的电视节目吗？如果能，你一般看什么节目？**

Do you have access to the Chinese TV programmes? If yes, which ones?

你会关心关于中国的新闻吗？你一般看中国还是英国的媒体报道？

Do you pay attention to the news/events about China? Do you mainly rely on the UK media or Chinese media?



**23. 你会和你的孩子讨论关于中国的新闻吗？请举例。**

Do you discuss the news/events about China with your children? If yes, please give me a few examples.

**24. 你怎样看英国媒体对中国的报道？**

What do you think of the representations of China in UK media?

**25. 你会管制你的孩子接触什么样的媒体吗？为什么？**

Do you have control over the media products your children consume? Why/why not?

## **Appendix 7 Interview schedule for head teachers or teachers in Chinese schools**

### **学校简介 About School**

1. 能否请您简单的介绍一下学校建立的过程?  
Could you please introduce how this school was founded?
2. 学校的宗旨和目标是什么?  
What are the missions and goals of this school?
3. 中文学校是如何运作的?  
How does this school operate?
4. 中文学校和英国各大华人社团的关系是什么?  
What are the school's connections with other major Chinese associations in Britain?
5. 中文学校的资金来源是什么?  
What are the sources of funding for this school?
6. 中文学校有多少师生? 多少个班级?  
How many teachers, students and classes are there in this school?
7. 中文学校参与在伦敦华人社会的活动吗? 如果参与, 能否介绍一下?  
Do you participate in any activities in Chinese communities in Britain?  
If yes, could you elaborate?
8. 中文学校近年的发展情况如何?  
What are the recent achievements and developments of this Chinese school?
9. 中文学校未来几年的规划是什么?  
What is the future plan for this Chinese school?

### **教学简介 About Teaching**

10. 学校学生的种族背景组成是怎样的(中国移民, 其他地区华人, 华裔第二代, 或非华人的后代)?  
What is the ethnic background of your students (descendants from China or other places, British born or non-Chinese)?
11. 学校教学采用的教材是什么?  
What are the teaching materials in this school?
12. 学校有什么课外的活动?  
What are the after school clubs or activities in this school?
13. 能否介绍一下学校教学的方式? 是否与英国主流学校不同? 如果是, 在哪些方面不一样?  
What is the pedagogy of teaching in this school? Do you think it is different from the pedagogy in British mainstream schools? If yes, in what way?
14. 据您的了解, 您的学生们是怎样学习中文和中国文化的?  
Based on your experiences, how do your pupils learn Chinese and Chinese culture?
15. 您觉得华裔第二代要学习中文吗? 为什么?  
Do you think it is important for British Chinese young people to learn Chinese? Why?
16. 您觉得中国华人, 特别是华裔第二代在英国社会的发展前景如何?

How do you think Chinese in Britain, especially British Chinese young people, will progress in the UK in the future?

**17.** 您怎么成为这所中文学校的老师的?

How did you become a teacher in this school?

**18.** 您在中文学校工作了几年?

How many years have you worked in this school?

**19.** 其间您面临的最大的困难是什么?

During your time at this school what difficulties have you faced?

**20.** 在这所学校最让您印象深刻的事件是什么?

What has been the most memorable event for you in this school?

## **Appendix 8 Information sheet for Chinese schoolteachers**

### **Title of Study: Cultural Identities of British Chinese young people**

**Researcher:** Danlu Wang, a Ph.D. student at the Institute of Education, University of London.

**Sponsor:** Centenary Scholarship, Institute of Education, University of London

**Aims of study:** This study aims to explore the cultural identities of British Chinese young people (aged 13-18) from their relationship with their ethnic origin, their schooling experiences in mainstream and Chinese schools and their interactions with media. The main research questions include: how do British Chinese young people perceive their place of origin and their family cultural heritage? What are their schooling experiences in mainstream and Chinese schools? How do they use different kinds of media? The findings of this study mainly contribute to the discussions of migration, cultural identities and youth studies in a global context.

**Participants:** British Chinese young people, their parents and teachers in Chinese Schools.

**Study:** Fieldwork involves questionnaire surveys, participant observations, interviews, group discussions and collecting details of media products used and consumed by British Chinese young people

**How you will be involved:** If you agree to take part in this research, I would like to arrange a face-to-face interview with you. This can be in a classroom in the school or in a public place of your choice. The interview will last around 45 minutes. I will audio-record our interview. The questions I will ask are mainly about your experiences in the Chinese school and your opinions about British Chinese young people.

If you are teaching GCSE/A-level classes in the Chinese school, I would like to conduct a questionnaire survey and a focus group discussion in your classroom with your permission. The questionnaire will take at most 15 minutes and the group discussions will last about 45 minutes. The questionnaire survey is mainly to investigate the patterns of your media use. The focus group discussion is about the media representations of, and your perceptions about, 'China and Chinese'. I will also conduct non-intrusive observations in your classroom while you are teaching, but you and your teaching are not the subject of my observation.

**Benefits and Risks:** Your participation in the study will help me to obtain a better understanding of your students' views about learning Chinese and Chinese culture, their schooling experiences and their cultural identities. All potential risks in this research are evaluated and reduced to a minimum by the Ethical Guidelines for British Educational Research.

**Confidentiality:** All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in my report or the publication of the research. Any personal information will be removed and excluded from the report or passed on to

third parties. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only I will have access to this information.

**Withdrawal of data:** Once you have decided to participate, you may still withdraw your data from the project at any time up until 3 months after the data collection. You can request to read a draft report to ensure that you are happy with the way that your confidentiality has been maintained.

**Contact:** If you have questions or problems related to this study, please don't hesitate to contact the researcher, Danlu Wang, either on +44(0)7527453011 or by email [dwang01@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:dwang01@ioe.ac.uk)

## **Appendix 9 Information sheet for British Chinese young people**

### **Title of Study: Cultural Identities of British Chinese young people**

**Researcher:** Danlu Wang, a Ph.D. student at the Institute of Education, University of London.

**Sponsor:** Centenary Scholarship, Institute of Education, University of London

**Aims of study:** This study aims to explore the cultural identities of British Chinese young people (aged 13-18) from their relationship with their ethnic origin, their schooling experiences in mainstream and Chinese schools, and their interactions with media. The main research questions include: how do British Chinese young people perceive their place of origin and their family cultural heritage? What are their schooling experiences in mainstream and Chinese schools? How do they use different kinds of media? The findings of this study mainly contribute to the discussions of migration, cultural identities and youth studies in the global context.

**Participants:** British Chinese young people, their parents and teachers in Chinese Schools.

**Study:** Fieldwork involves questionnaire surveys, participant observations, interviews, group discussions and collecting details of media products used and consumed by British Chinese young people

**How you will be involved:** If you agree to take part in this research, I would like to arrange a face-to-face interview with you. This can be in a classroom in the school or at your home with your parents' permission. The interview will last about 60 minutes. I will audio-record our interview. The questions I will ask are mainly about your schooling experiences, your media use patterns and your opinions about 'China and Chinese'.

If you are a student in GCSE/A-level classes in your Chinese school, you maybe involved in a questionnaire survey and a focus group discussion. The questionnaire will take at most 15 minutes to complete and the group discussions will last about 45 minutes. The questionnaire survey is mainly to investigate the patterns of your media use. The focus group discussion is about the media representations of, and your perceptions about, 'China and Chinese'.

If you participate in the participatory photography workshop, I would like to use the photographs you have chosen and taken in my research with your permission.

**Benefits and Risks:** Your participation in the study will help me obtain a better understanding of the experiences and cultural identities of British Chinese young people. It also provides you with an opportunity to express yourself as a British Chinese young person in British society. You may also acquire media production skills if you wish to participate in media workshops. All potential risks in this research are evaluated and reduced to a minimum by the Ethical Guidelines for British Educational Research.

**Confidentiality:** All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in my report or the publication of the research. Any personal information will be removed and excluded from the report or passed on to third parties. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only I will have access to this information.

**Withdrawal of data:** Once you have decided to participate, you may still withdraw your data from the project at any time up until 3 months after the data collection. You can request to read a draft report to ensure that you are happy with the way that your confidentiality has been maintained.

**Contact:** If you have questions or problems related to this study, please don't hesitate to contact the researcher, Danlu Wang, either on +44(0)7527453011 or by email, [dwang01@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:dwang01@ioe.ac.uk)

## **Appendix 10: Information sheet for Parents of British Chinese young people**

### **Title of Study: Cultural Identities of British Chinese young people**

**Researcher:** Danlu Wang, a Ph.D. student at the Institute of Education, University of London.

**Sponsor:** Centenary Scholarship, Institute of Education, University of London

**Aims of study:** This study aims to explore the cultural identities of British Chinese young people (aged 13-18) from their relationship with their ethnic origin, their schooling experiences in mainstream and Chinese schools and their interactions with media. The main research questions include: how do British Chinese young people perceive their place of origin and their family cultural heritage? What are their schooling experiences in mainstream and Chinese schools? How do they use different kinds of media? The findings of this study mainly contribute to the discussions of migration, cultural identities and youth studies in a global context.

**Participants:** British Chinese young people, their parents, and teachers in Chinese Schools.

**Study:** Fieldwork involves questionnaire surveys, participant observations, interviews, group discussions and collecting details of media products used and consumed by British Chinese young people.

### **How you will be involved:**

If you agree to allow your children to take part in this research, I would like to conduct a face-to-face interview with your children in their Chinese school or at your home with your permission. The interview will last about 60 minutes. I will audio-record our interview. The questions I will ask are mainly about your schooling experiences, your media use patterns and your opinions about 'China and Chinese'. If your children participate in the participatory photography workshop, I would like to use the photos they have chosen or taken in my research with your permission.

If you accept a face-to-face interview with me, I would like to conduct the interview at your home or any public place of your choice. The interview will last around 60 minutes. I will audio-record our interview. The questions I will ask are mainly to ascertain your opinions about the experiences and cultural identities of your children as British Chinese young people. With your permission, I would like to pay a visit to your home to understand your children's experiences in their home settings.

**Benefits and Risks:** Your participation in the study will help me develop a better understanding of the experiences and cultural identities of British Chinese young people. All potential risks in this research are evaluated and reduced to a minimum by the Ethical Guidelines for British Educational Research.



**Confidentiality:** All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in my report or the publication of the research. Any personal information will be removed and excluded from the report or passed on to third parties. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only I will have access to this information.

**Withdrawal of data:** Once you have decided to participate, you may still withdraw your data from the project at any time up until 3 months after the data collection. You can request to read a draft report to ensure that you are happy with the way that your confidentiality has been maintained.

**Contact:** If you have questions or problems related to this study, please don't hesitate to contact the researcher, Danlu Wang, either on +44(0)7527453011 or by email [dwang01@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:dwang01@ioe.ac.uk)

## Appendix 11 Consent Form for Participants in Research Studies

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet **and/or listened to an explanation of the research.**

### **Title of Study: Cultural Identities of British Chinese young people**

- Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organizing the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part.
- If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.
- *I understand that if I decide at any other time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researcher involved and be withdrawn from it immediately without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data until three months after I have started to participate in the study.*
- *I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be treated in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.*

Participant's Statement: I \_\_\_\_\_ agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Investigator's Statement: I Danlu Wang confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the participant.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian Signature (for participants under 16) \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 12 Participatory Photography Workshop Proposal**

**Project Title:** China (Chinese, Chinese culture...) through my eyes

**Form:** Photography workshop and a final display

**Students:** 13 —18 years old students (minimum 4 students)

**Teaching Language:** Chinese and English

**Duration:** 16:00 to 17:00 every Sunday, from 18 April to 4<sup>th</sup> July 2009 (except 30 May and 20<sup>th</sup> June)

**Content:** Photography and photo editing skills

**Coordinator:** Danlu Wang

### **Resources:**

This project is coordinated by Danlu Wang, who is a PhD student in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. This project will receive advice and support in the form of teaching materials and equipment from both the London Mandarin School and the Institute of Education.

**Cameras:** Students need to bring their own digital camera.

### **Benefits to students and the school:**

Students can learn skills and knowledge about photography and photo editing. More importantly, this project will encourage them to think about Chinese culture and provide a platform for them to express their own understandings of China and Chinese culture through images.

For the school, this project opens up a new after-school course for the Chinese school. It explores a new way of enhancing students' awareness of Chinese culture. The display of students' work can help parents and teachers to understand more about the opinions of young British Chinese.

### **Teaching Plans:**

#### **18<sup>th</sup> April**

Get to know students, introduce our project.

Topic: Introduction: Equipment - camera and lenses.

Picture Composition – 'rules of thirds' and viewpoint in picture.

Practice: Take three photos of the same object with different photocompositions.

#### **25<sup>th</sup> April**

Topic: Light and colour: the use of flashlight, the night scenes and snow scenes.

Practice: Take photos outdoors or indoors to experience the change of light.

Assignment: Think about what 'homeland' is for you and try to find one to two pictures that capture your imagination.

## **2nd May**

Discuss the assignment from last week.

Topic: Landscape photography.

Practice: Take pictures of plants, flowers and architecture.

Assignment: Find three landscape photos that you think best represent China.

Find three landscape photos that you think best represent Britain.

## **9<sup>th</sup> May**

Discuss the assignment from last week.

Topic: Portrait photography.

Practice: Take portrait pictures using each other as models.

Assignment: Find three portrait photos that you think best represent Chinese people.

Find three portrait photos that you think best represent British people.

## **16<sup>th</sup> May**

Discuss the assignment from last week.

Topic: Photography of sport and action.

Practice and Assignment: Take action photographs using each other as models.

## **6<sup>th</sup> June**

Topic: News photography and documentary photography.

Practice: Discuss news photos and documentary photos in Chinese and British media.

## **13<sup>th</sup> June**

Topic: Ethics for photography.

Practice: Discuss ethical dilemmas in photography.

Assignment: Prepare for the photography project: China and Chinese through my eyes.

**27<sup>th</sup> June**

Topic: Photoshop software.

Practice: Edit photos using Photoshop software.

Assignment: Plan for the photography project: China and Chinese through my eyes.

**4<sup>th</sup> July**

Topic: Title and Caption.

Practice: Give a title and captions to five of your photos.

Assignment: Taking photos for the photography project: China and Chinese through my eyes.

**11<sup>th</sup> Sep**

Prepare for Photo Display: photo selection and editing.

**18<sup>th</sup> Sep**

Photograph Exhibition

## Appendix 13 Kuan's photography project and transcriptions

### Slide 1 Name of the project

The tour of Jiangnan—The blend of new and old Chinese culture

江南行~新老交融  
中国文化



## Slide 2

The globe painted with a map of SiChuan



### Slide 3

We all are a family





## Slide 4

Beside the Ancient Yumen Wall and moat of Suzhou



## Slide 5

The historical town Tongli in Suzhou



## Slide 6

The historical town Tongli in Suzhou



## Slide 7

The drum performance in Qiandao Lake





## Slide 8

The handy mirrors in Qiandao Lake



## Slide 9

Chinese fashion magazines



**Slide 10**

Modern Chinese fashion I



**Slide 11**

Modern Chinese fashion II





## Slide 12

'Ancient' Chinese fashion



### Slide 13

The make-up and costume in Yue Opera



**Slide 14**

Buddha in Lingyin Temple, Hangzhou

# 杭州灵隐寺如来佛





## Slide 15

The Long-live one noodle



**Slide 16**

A Chinese wedding bed



## Slide 17

### The View of Shanghai



**Slide 18**

The Market Palace





## Slide 19

Play pokers during the break





## Slide 20

A wonderful meal in Suzhou



苏州丰盛  
的一餐

## Appendix 14 Yunke's photography project and transcriptions

**Slide 1** Name of the project:  
China in my eyes



## Slide 2

Mascots in 2008 Beijing Olympic



### Slide 3

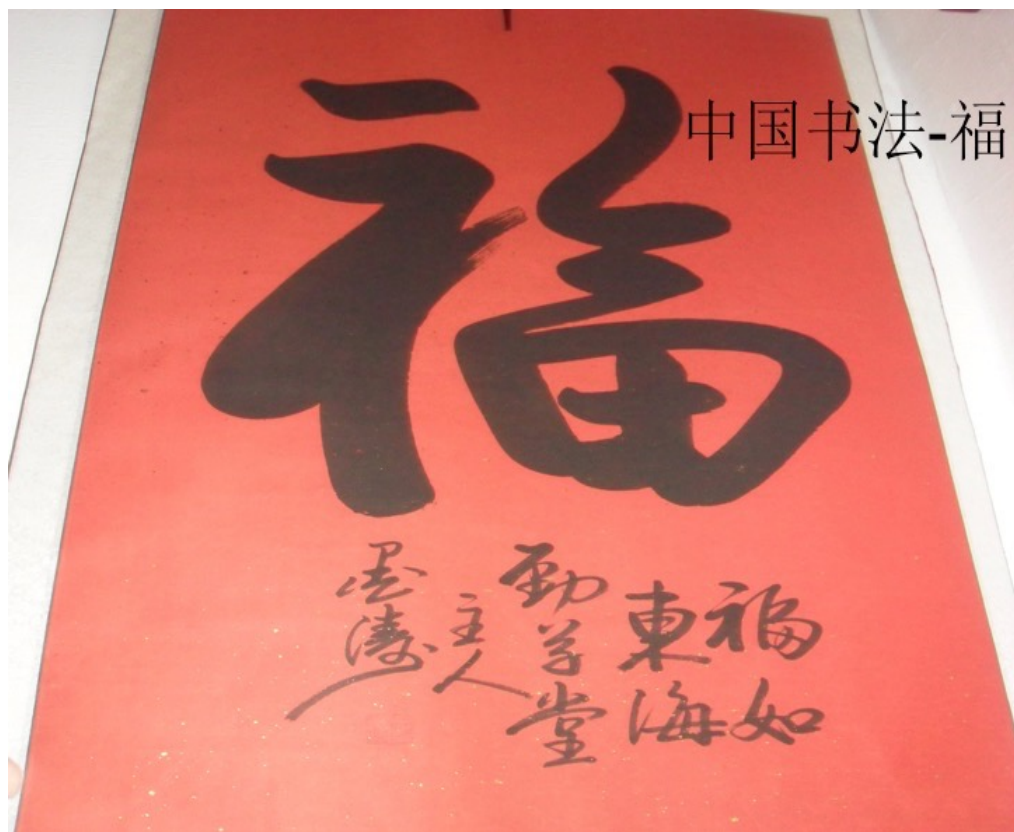
Harmonious atmosphere



一团和气

**Slide 4**

Chinese calligraphy – 'Fortune'



**Slide 5**

Red fish - prosperity every year



红鱼-年年有余



## Slide 6

### Characters in Chinese traditional operas



**Slide 7**

Heroine - Mu Guiying





**Slide 8**

Famous general in Sanguo Period: Zhao Yun



**Slide 9**

Gu Zheng (Chinese traditional musical instrument)



**Slide 10**

Chinese chopsticks



**Slide 11**

Chinese tea set





**Slide 12**

Zongzi - food for Duanwu Festival



### Slide 13

Learning to make Chinese dumplings



## Slide 14

The annual meeting of Chinese Life Scientists Society in the UK



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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The term 'model minority' was first used by sociologist William Petersen (1966) to describe 'Japanese Americans' as an ethnic minority who achieved prosperity and enter the mainstream of American life owing to their cultural values, such as a deep respect for parents and authority, a reverence for learning and a proclivity for hard work (Osajima, 2005). The discourse of model minority was later used popularly to acknowledge the high educational achievement and upward occupational movement of minority ethnic groups.

<sup>2</sup> See Programme Introduction on the BBC website:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00ykxg9>

<sup>3</sup> See news report from the *Guardian* about learning Mandarin as a compulsory element of the primary curriculum. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/may/15/languages-primary-schools-2014>

<sup>4</sup> 四邑 Siyi literally means 'four districts', which is the collective name of the four counties of 台山 Taishan, 新会 Xinhui, 开平 Kaiping and 恩平 Enping in Guangdong's Pearl River Delta region, on the south east coast of China.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962 and 1968, see

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/commonwealth-immigration-control-legislation.htm>

<sup>6</sup> 'Stateless Chinese' in Hong Kong are holders of Hong Kong Certificates of Identity rather than British (HK) passports. They were exempt from the restrictions imposed on Commonwealth immigration in 1962 and 1968 and eligible for work permits in Britain.

<sup>7</sup> These statistics are from International Student Statistics: UK Higher Education report, on the UK Council for International Student Affairs web site, retrieved on the 13th May, 2016, [http://institutions.ukcisa.org.uk//info-for-universities-colleges--schools/policy-research--statistics/research--statistics/international-students-in-uk-he/#International-students-in-UK-HE-by-domicile,-level-and-mode,-European-Union-\(EU\)-\(excluding-UK\)-and-non-EU,-2014-15](http://institutions.ukcisa.org.uk//info-for-universities-colleges--schools/policy-research--statistics/research--statistics/international-students-in-uk-he/#International-students-in-UK-HE-by-domicile,-level-and-mode,-European-Union-(EU)-(excluding-UK)-and-non-EU,-2014-15)

<sup>8</sup> Ratio is calculated by the author according to 2001 and 2011 UK census.

<sup>9</sup> Fujian is a southeast coast province next to Guangdong in Mainland China. Fujianese have their own dialect but the formal education in school is in Mandarin, the official language of China.

<sup>10</sup> See news report '58 dead in port lorry' from BBC website, retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/796791.stm>

<sup>11</sup> See BBC News report <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/lancashire/3464203.stm>

<sup>12</sup> Cantonese is a language mainly used in Hong Kong, Macau and Guangdong Province in the southeast of China. Mandarin, also called 'Putonghua', is the official language in China and Taiwan. Traditional characters are used in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, and many overseas Chinese communities. In the 1950s, the Chinese government introduced the simplified form of characters, which are currently being used across China, Singapore and Malaysia and are gaining popularity among overseas Chinese communities and non-Chinese learners.

<sup>13</sup> See news report 'British "Chinese fever" continues to heat up, Chinese schools have reached more than 130', [chinanews.com](http://www.chinanews.com/edu/2011/10-13/3384888.shtml), extracted on 16th Oct, 2013 from website <http://www.chinanews.com/edu/2011/10-13/3384888.shtml>

<sup>14</sup> Sources include list of Chinese community Language schools from websites for overseas Chinese in the UK:

UKFCS website: [http://ukfcs.info/en/member\\_schools.php](http://ukfcs.info/en/member_schools.php);

UKER.net, <http://apply.uker.net/application/42373.html>;

Chineseineurope.net, <http://www.chineseineurope.net/cms/2010/0303/62.html>.

<sup>15</sup> See Phoenix Chinese News and Entertainment Channel website. Information retrieved from <http://www.pcne.tv/node/250> on the 25th Jan, 2014

<sup>16</sup> See The Chinese Channel Limited website. Information retrieved from [http://www.chinese-channel.co.uk/contact\\_2.php](http://www.chinese-channel.co.uk/contact_2.php) on the 25th 2014

<sup>17</sup> Harding distinguishes three key themes in the contemporary discourse of Greater China: the rise of a transnational Chinese economy; the (prospect of a) reunification of a Chinese state; and the emergence of a global Chinese culture.



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<sup>18</sup> The Umbrella Revolution (or movement) 雨傘革命 was a series of sit-in street protests that occurred in central Hong Kong from 26 September to 15 December 2014. The protests were against the proposed reforms to the Hong Kong electoral system by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. The reform was seen to be the pre-screening by the Chinese government of the candidates for the Hong Kong Chief Executive election in 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Mong Kok civic unrest, also called the '魚蛋革命 Fishball Revolution', occurred in Mong Kok, Hong Kong from the night of 8 February 2016 until the next morning. It started following the government's crackdown on unlicensed street hawkers during the Chinese New Year holidays. Eventually the incident escalated to violent clashes between police and protesters. The Economist described it as 'the worst outbreak of rioting since the 1960s' in Hong Kong (The Economist, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Ofcom is an independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries.

<sup>21</sup> See statistics report: Percentage of Pupils by Ethnic Group, Borough, released by DfE. Data retrieved from the website of [www.data.london.gov.uk](http://data.london.gov.uk) on 20th Feb, 2015: <http://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/percentage-pupils-ethnic-group-borough>

<sup>22</sup> All parents' names are pseudonyms. Both Cantonese and Mandarin phonetic systems are used to reflect the sounds of names that participants officially use.

<sup>23</sup> The 8 classes are:

- (1) higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations;
- (2) lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations;
- (3) intermediate occupations;
- (4) small employers and own account workers;
- (5) lower supervisory and technical occupations;
- (6) semi-routine occupations;
- (7) routine occupations;
- (8) never worked and long-term unemployed.

Criteria for detailed classification are on the Office for National Statistics website.

<sup>24</sup> The Cultural Revolution was a socio-political movement that took place in the People's Republic of China from 1966-1976. It was launched by China's Communist leader Mao Zedong in order to reassert his authority over the Chinese government and preserve 'true' Communist ideology in the country. The movement paralyzed China politically and significantly affected the country's economy and society.

<sup>25</sup> The Tian'anmen Square protests were student-led demonstrations in Beijing in 1989. The protests were suppressed by government military forces and hundreds of unarmed civilians were killed.

<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00ykxfh/episodes/guide>

<sup>27</sup> The ten-minute clip shown in discussion groups is available to view on the BBC website. It has been broken down into four clips on the website. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00yskn8/clips>

<sup>28</sup> Zongzi is a traditional Chinese food, made of glutinous rice stuffed with different fillings and wrapped in large flat bamboo leaves.

<sup>29</sup> The nine categories include:

1. Homework
2. Social networking sites (including visiting others' and creating their own profiles on SNS such as Facebook, Myspace and Twitter; participating in discussions in online forums)
3. Online gaming
4. Information Searching (includes using online search engines for general browsing or purposeful investigation)
5. Watching audio-visual content (including watching and downloading TV programmes and films from online TV services, watching and downloading video/audio clips, and music videos from video sharing websites such as YouTube)
6. Communication (including instant messaging via web applications such as MSN messenger and QQ, making online phone calls via services like Skype and sending and receiving emails)
7. Avatar sites (visiting websites where users can create and play a self representative character, like Second life, Club Penguin, or Online Avatar)
8. News (going on websites related to national and worldwide news)

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9. Transactions (buying or selling things online)

<sup>30</sup> The World of Warcraft is a massive online multiplayer role-playing game created in 2004 by Blizzard Entertainment. It had an active online subscriber base of 9.6 million users in 2012 at the time when this study was conducted. See report on World of Warcraft subscribers on <http://www.statista.com/statistics/276601/number-of-world-of-warcraft-subscribers-by-quarter/>

<sup>31</sup> 'Gangnam Style' is a K-pop single by South Korean musician Psy. The song was released in July 2012 and soon became the first YouTube video to reach more than a billion views worldwide.

<sup>32</sup> Figures were extracted from the company report of Tencent that developed QQ, 'Tencent-2015 Fourth Quarter and Annual Results', retrieved on 17th, March 17, 2016 from <http://tencent.com/enus/content/ir/news/2016/attachments/20160317.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Edexcel is a multinational education and examination body owned by Pearson PLC. It regulates school examinations under the British Curriculum and offers qualifications for schools on the international and regional scale. The Edexcel clips mentioned in the text are exam videos produced by Edexcel for exam revisions.

<sup>34</sup> See 英国中文教育促进会 2015 年文教活动一览表 [The List of UKAPCE cultural and educational activities in 2015] retrieved from [http://www.ukapce.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=384&Itemid=49](http://www.ukapce.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=384&Itemid=49)

<sup>35</sup> Majiang, 麻将, also spelled Mahjong, is a four-player game that originated in China.

<sup>36</sup> Office of Population Censuses and Surveys: 1981 Census

<sup>37</sup> See (T. Jones, 1993)

<sup>38</sup> 1991 data have been adjusted for census under enumeration using OPCS/GRO(S) 1994 adjustment factors

<sup>39</sup> Pseudonyms have been assigned to participants. English names and Chinese names were chosen to reflect participants' preference for using their own English/Chinese names in interviews. Both Cantonese and Mandarin phonetic systems are used to reflect the sounds of names that are officially used by participants.

<sup>40</sup> See Programme Introduction at the BBC website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00ykxg9>

See Interview at the BBC website: <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-12389573>